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ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER



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CONCERNING ISABEL CARNABY

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CONCERNING ISABEL CARNABY

BY ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER,
AUTHOR OF A DOUBLE THREAD,
VERSES WISE AND OTHER-
WISE, AND VERSES
GRAVE AND
GAY



NEW YORK

NEW YORK

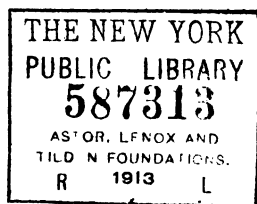
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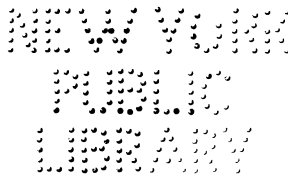
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Dedication

**To Mine Own People : meaning those within
The magic ring of home—my kith and kin ;**

**And those with whom my soul delights to dwell—
Who walk with me as friends, and wish me well ;**

**And lastly those—a large, unnumbered band,
Unknown to me—who read and understand.**



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PROLOGUE.

A woman's tongue is ever slow
To tell the thing she does not know.

THERE was a large dinner-party in Grosvenor Square at the house of Lord Kesterton, one of the new peers.

"Are you thoroughly enjoying your glories and honours?" inquired Lady Eleanor Gregory of her host, who had taken her down to dinner.

"Well, I must confess that I feel rather like the man who lost his wife, and said it was 'verra dull but verro peaceful'; and I have come to the conclusion that peace is an acquired taste."

"Then do you hanker after the fighting in your dear old House of Commons?"

Lord Kesterton smiled. "I am afraid I still babble o' green benches when I get the chance. The House of Commons is like certain women of one's acquaintance: you quarrel with them, and they expect too much from you, and you vow you will enjoy yourself and have nothing more to do with them; but, all the same, they have spoilt your taste for anything else, and they make all other women seem insufferably dull."

"And now I have got to scold you for dismissing my poor, dear Harry," said Lady Eleanor.

"Uncork the vials of your wrath," replied her host, "and I will endeavour to suffer and be strong."

"I shall appeal to Mr. Madderley to second my vote of censure," continued the lady, turning to the Royal Academician who sat at her right hand. "I suppose I ought to talk to you about art, but I am going to talk to you about politics."

"Please do not talk to me about art, dear lady; I could not bear it from you," replied the artist.

"Why not?"

"Because I should thereby discover that you knew nothing at all about it; and the one rag of faith still wrapped round my jaded spirit is my belief in your omniscience. If you take that away from me I shall sink lower and lower, and shall probably end in doubting the wisdom of Woman, or the supremacy of the British ratepayer."

Lady Eleanor laughed. "Don't you feel like this when I talk about politics?"

"Far from it. I know absolutely nothing about them myself; and when I hear you speaking familiarly—nay, even flippantly—of Whips and Under Secretaries and similar ruling powers, I regard you with awe as a mighty sibyl juggling with the mysterious forces of the Unknown."

"I see; it must sound rather impressive."

"Impressive is not the word—it sounds simply tremendous. Calling Under Secretaries by their Christian names seems to me like patting a thunderstorm or playing with an earthquake; yet I have often heard you do it without an apparent qualm. It is marvellous!"

Lady Eleanor was very proud of what she considered her wire-pulling powers; therefore she enjoyed the Academician's persiflage. It was in cases like this that Madderley showed himself such a clever man; he always said

disagreeable things ; but he generally took care that they were the sort of disagreeable things that people wanted him to say. Women liked Mr. Madderley because, they said, he did not flatter them ; they never found out that it was because he flattered them that they liked him so much.

"When I talk about art, however, you regard me as 'an unlessoned girl,' I suppose," suggested her ladyship.

"That certainly is my idea, but, had you given me time, I would have decked its crudeness with some flowers of speech."

"I am so glad that I did not give you time, then. It would be insufferable if you began to be pleasant ! Your *raison d'être* would be gone if you left off telling disagreeable truths, and we should all leave off liking you."

The artist smiled. "It is very kind of you to say that, Lady Eleanor ; but don't you think that the men who tell palatable fibs are really the popular men ?"

"No, I don't," Lady Eleanor hastened to assure him ; "now you are immensely popular—you must know that you are ; and yet you always say straight out whatever you think, and never mind how disagreeable it is. It is this truthfulness that makes us all admire and trust you."

The artist smiled again.

"Do you remember," continued Lady Eleanor, "how you once told a whole group of us our faults at a party at the Farleys' ? You said that I was ambitious, and that Lady Farley was cruel, and that Isabel was shallow, and that Violet was cold. I have never forgotten it ; I thought it was so nice and plucky of you to tell us the truth straight out like that."

Mr. Madderley remembered that he had once said these things ; he also remembered that he had never

thought any of them, but this he did not consider it necessary to confess.

"But where are the politics you said you were going to talk to me about?"

"Oh! of course—I forgot. I want to ask your opinion as to the way in which the Government has treated me. You know Harry Mortimer was Lord Kesterton's understudy—no, I mean Under Secretary—at the War Office; and it was a very comfortable arrangement for both of them."

"Well?"

"Then Lord Kesterton took his own peerage without a single twinge of conscience. But now that poor, dear Harry has succeeded to his uncle, and become Lord Gravesend, he has got to be sent away like an inefficient footman, because they say they cannot both of them be in the House of Lords. So please tell your host that you think he has behaved abominably!"

"I do indeed. Such conduct seems to me unjustifiable. It is like drinking oneself, and insisting on one's servants being teetotalers."

Lord Kesterton laughed. Madderley always amused him, and he loved to be amused. "But you are keeping back part of the truth, Lady Eleanor," he said; "we have endeavoured to break the blow to Gravesend by giving him the Governorship of New North Wales."

Lady Eleanor sighed. "That is nothing. I wanted Harry to have a career."

"You forget that he is going to marry you," replied her host; "surely that is a career sufficient to satisfy even the most ambitious of men, and to occupy the time of the most industrious."

"Of course it is. What I ought to have said was that I wanted Harry to have a recreation."

"Recreation means variety of occupation," suggested Lord Kesterton, "and he would hardly find that—after marriage—at the War Office."

"Do you think he will find it in New North Wales?"

"Most certainly; because there, in his official life, his duty will be to rule."

"You are very rude," laughed Lady Eleanor; "I shall talk to Mr. Madderley instead, and ask him if he doesn't think that Gravesend is a very depressing title for a young man to come into."

"It suggests the quintessence of finality," replied the artist, "there is no doubt of that."

Lord Gravesend's *fiancée* nodded. "I mean to alter it, and to call him 'the Lord Harry' instead. That would be prettier, don't you think?"

"Far prettier; also more colloquial, and I love colloquialisms. They are the next best thing to stories in dialect. A story in dialect invariably does me good, because I do not understand it."

"Then do you think that it is the things we don't understand that do us good?" queried the lady.

"Of course; that is why our prescriptions are always written in Latin, and our *ménus* in French."

"I see."

"When I read in the vulgar tongue," continued Mr. Madderley, "that a man is brave and a woman is beautiful, I am not impressed. I have met brave men in the flesh, and I have found that they generally talk about nothing but slain beasts, and go to sleep after dinner. I have also met beautiful women."

"Did you find them equally disappointing?" asked Lady Eleanor.

"A woman always seems to think that if she has a

face she need not possess a head as well. Personally I prefer both."

"You are shockingly cynical!"

"Here the power of dialect comes in," continued the artist, "for when I read that a man is 'braw' and a woman is 'bonny,' I know no wells of experience from which to draw cold water to throw on these illusions; therefore my imagination runs riot, and clothes the parties thus described in impossibly perfect attributes. I never met a 'braw lad' or a 'bonny lassie' in my life, that I know of; so I still picture such beings as ideal and glorious creations."

After a little more conversation about airy nothings, Lady Eleanor turned to her host and asked in a low voice: "Who is going to take Harry's place at the War Office?"

The Secretary of State raised his eyebrows. "I really cannot tell you Cabinet secrets, my dear lady."

"Oh! yes, you can. I want dreadfully to know, and I will promise faithfully not to tell anybody, if only you will take me into your confidence. Please do, there's a dear man!"

Lord Kesterton hesitated. Lady Eleanor certainly was very attractive, and it is always pleasant to please a pretty woman. Seeing him hesitate, she increased her coaxing tenfold.

"Well, suppose that I tell you as a great secret," he said at last; "will you give me your word not to repeat it to anybody?"

"Of course I will. I should never think of doing such a thing."

Lord Kesterton lowered his voice to a confidential pitch. "The new Under Secretary for War is our honourable friend the member for Chayford."

Lady Eleanor's eyes sparkled with delight; it was her rôle to stand behind the scenes of Governments and to give little jerks to the ropes—at least, she thought it was; and now both her curiosity and her love of power were gratified.

"I am so glad!" she exclaimed; "he is such a pleasant man—and very clever too, don't you think?"

Like all women, Lady Eleanor Gregory considered the word clever was complimentary; like all men, Lord Kesterton considered it quite the reverse.

"Clever?" he replied; "my dear young lady, what a word to apply to a brilliant politician! Why, he is already one of the ablest men in the Liberal party, and he has only been in the House three years."

"I am so glad you told me. It will interest Harry most tremendously!"

Lord Kesterton started. "But you gave me your word that you would not tell anybody."

"So I did; I quite forgot. But Harry doesn't count, you know. I never keep anything from him—except, of course, the number of dances that I give to other men; but that is different."

"I cannot see why Gravesend doesn't count; he always appears to me to be a man of considerable weight."

"Oh! but you are not engaged to him; if you were you would know that his considerable weight could be tampered with by the display of a little tact and persuasion. But now tell me more about Harry's successor. Of course I know all about who he is to-day; but who was he yesterday? I want to read up the back numbers of his story."

The host shook his head. "Back numbers are always dull and generally fictitious, I find."

"I don't; they amuse me immensely—especially

with portraits from early and hideous childhood up to 'present day'."

"Lady Eleanor," said the Secretary for War in a very low voice, "do you know why you have been successful in extracting this confidential communication from me?"

"No."

"Guess."

Lady Eleanor thought for a moment. "Because you knew you could trust me not to repeat it?"

Lord Kesterton smiled. "That was not exactly my reason. Try again."

Lady Eleanor knitted her pretty forehead. "Because you thought that Harry had the right to know who was to step into his shoes?"

Her host shook his head.

Lady Eleanor smiled. "Because I am a very charming young woman?"

"I do not deny that that had something to do with my breach of confidence; but there was still another and a better reason."

"Then I cannot guess it."

"Will you give it up?"

Lady Eleanor nodded.

"I ventured to tell you this State secret," whispered Lord Kesterton to his pretty guest, "because the fact is already announced in the evening paperr."

CHAPTER I.

Childish Things.

As fays and elves and witches old
To children of a gentler mould,
Angels and devils came their way
And were adapted to their play.

A QUAIN old town which had long ago ceased to be anything but picturesque, but which never forgot that it had once been prosperous, as some women never forget that they have once been pretty—a town in which the square, red-brick houses pretended that they were frowning on the streets in front, while they were really smiling on the gardens at the back all the time—a town with an interesting past and a most uneventful present—such was Chayford in the county of Mershire.

A noticeable figure in the town of Chayford—a man of courtly manners, cultivated mind and consistent piety—a scholar, moreover, of no mean order, whose learning was profound and whose wisdom was not of this world—such was Mark Seaton, a minister “of the people called Methodists”.

In the days of his youth the Reverend Mark Seaton had chosen as his wife Ruth, the only daughter of David Crayshaw of Camchester—well known among the Methodists of the past generation as a “leading friend”; and Mrs. Seaton had inherited a fortune from her father, in

addition to many gifts of mind and person. As she had been a dutiful daughter, so she was a devoted wife. To her children she was ever sympathetic and tender, with intermittent attacks of discipline, which she disliked as much as they did ; and while her heart was ever begging her to indulge, her conscience kept bidding her to punish them. She had been known to whip her darlings, urged by a painful sense of duty thereto ; but on such sad occasions she wore a shawl for the rest of the day, just as she did when the minister was not well, or when any important member of the congregation died.

Mark and Ruth Seaton had only two children, Paul and Joanna by name. Joanna was the elder by a year ; but Paul was so much the bigger and stronger and better-looking of the two, that he took the lead in everything.

Paul and Joanna Seaton were brought up in the good old Methodist style, and learned to take life seriously. To them every trivial choice was a decision between good and evil—every fortunate accident a special interposition of Providence on their behalf. They were early taught by their father that the only two things of importance in this life are salvation and education ; likewise, that the verb *To Be* is of infinite moment—the verb *To Do* of great weight—and the verb *To Have* of no significance at all. Therefore, whatever faults and failings they might suffer from in after life, there was no possibility of the little Seatons becoming vulgar.

It was when the Seatons “travelled” in the Chayford circuit that Paul and Joanna formed their friendship with Alice Martin. Alice was three years younger than Joanna and two years younger than Paul. It was true that she was not as clever as Joanna—but then she was much prettier, which made it all right. And in childish days—as in later ones—Alice Martin was always ready to play

inferior parts in a grateful spirit ; a habit of mind which makes people to be beloved, if downtrodden, by their fellow-creatures.

Alice's parents were wealthy and worldly persons. Of being the former they were proud, and of being the latter they were ignorant ; in fact they imagined that they were a very godly couple, because they attended chapel regularly, and had their library lined with calf-bound copies of the *Methodist Magazine*, dating from its Arminian days. Mr. and Mrs. Martin regarded religion very much as they regarded an "English manufacture" or an "Irish industry" ; that is to say, they lost no opportunity of patronizing and advertizing it ; but felt that in so doing they were conferring a favour and meriting a vote of thanks.

Mrs. Martin was an extremely amusing woman ; but she herself had no idea of this—she imagined she was only dignified and edifying. She once said : "Although my husband is a rich man and a county magistrate, he has the fear of the Lord before his eyes". And she had no idea that there was anything humorous in this use of the conjunction *although*.

Another great friend of the minister's children was Edgar Ford—an earnest little boy who was always asking profound and unanswerable questions. His father was an opulent merchant ; and his mother an elegant and well-bred woman, who hid great kindness of heart under a somewhat cold and stately exterior.

But perhaps the most important figure in the children's world—while they were yet children—was their old nurse Martha, a very superior and excellent person who had lived with Mrs. Seaton before her marriage. Martha had another servant under her ; but she would share with no one the delightful duty of looking after

Paul and Joanna. It was Martha who corrected their childish sins and comforted their childish sorrows; and it was Martha who placed them upon an intimate, yet withal comfortable, footing with the principalities and powers of the spiritual world. To Martha they owed their ineradicable belief that an inclination to idleness or disobedience or greediness was no mere instinct, but a suggestion of the Evil One himself, who—bat-winged and cloven-footed, as he appeared in the illustrations to the *Pilgrim's Progress*—lurked in the dark places of the china-pantry and the back-stairs, for the set purpose of betraying to destruction the souls of the minister's children. Likewise, they were taught that the subdual of this inclination was no mere outcome of a line of plain-living, high-thinking ancestors, but a triumph of the powers of light over the powers of darkness. These beliefs Paul and Joanna never outgrew; which, perhaps, accounted for the fact that, as man and woman, they did not underestimate the difference between good and evil.

At Chayford Paul and Joanna spent three of the interminable years of childhood; and Chayford Chapel was ever afterwards associated in their minds with all that is sacred and holy. It was there that they had first touched the fringe of the Unseen, and caught glimpses of life's deeper meanings; it was there that they had sung the old-fashioned hymns to the old-fashioned tunes, and had felt as if they themselves were somehow one with the white-robed multitude, which no man can number, singing the song that the angels cannot learn. Then the hearts of the children were filled with joy and their eyes with tears, and a strange thrill ran through the whole of their being. They did not understand why they felt so gloriously happy and yet wanted to cry; for they were then

too young to know that earth, and probably heaven, has nothing better to offer us than that same thrill, which runs through us when we catch fleeting glimpses of the Beautiful and the True, and rise superior for the time being to all that is sordid and cowardly and mean. For the moment, we are "pure in heart"; and therefore, either through the interpretation of art or the revelation of nature, either in the loyalty of a great people or in the love on a familiar face, we "see God".

When Paul and Joanna were respectively eighteen and nineteen, their father's health gave way and he was obliged to "sit down"—a synonym among Methodist ministers for retiring upon half-pay—and he chose Chayford as the spot where he would finally settle. The Seatons had spent their three years at Chayford some time previously; and it had suited them so well that they selected it as their permanent abode.

There is no doubt that the Methodist system of having a sort of "general post" among the ministry every Conference keeps the Church together in a most successful way; but there is also no doubt that a triennial removal falls heavily on the women of the ministers' households. No Wesleyan minister can stay longer than three years in any circuit; and he need only stay one; so, like the Mohammedans and their Hegira, all his race reckons time by "Conference".

There was a nomadic strain in Joanna's blood, inherited from three generations of preaching ancestry; and she was incapable of feeling happy under any roof-tree for a longer period than three years. But her mother was of a less restless disposition; and had learnt that if one is continually moving one's Lares and Penates, these idols are apt to get very much the worse for wear, if not actually broken to pieces. It is only

when a Wesleyan minister "sits down," that his family are able to thoroughly understand the meaning of the word *home*. Therefore Mrs. Seaton rejoiced in secret over her house at Chayford. Her husband's health was not such as to give her any real anxiety, but he was growing too old for full work, and needed rest; and the fortune that she had brought to him made him feel that he was justified in taking, with a clear conscience, the repose for which he craved.

Paul was doing very well at Kingswood School; and Joanna was doing equally well in the school of domestic life; and their parents' cup of joy was full when at last Paul won a scholarship at Oxford.

On the morning when Paul's triumph had been made known at home, Mrs. Seaton went into the kitchen after breakfast to break the glad news to Martha. But the latter met her with a most ominous expression of countenance.

"There's a sad thing happened this morning, ma'am, and no mistake," she began, with a profound sigh.

"Indeed, Martha, and what is that?" inquired her mistress.

"The best hot-water jug has gone to its long home."

"Oh! Martha, not the Ruth and Naomi one?"

"The very same, ma'am, more's the pity!"

Now it happened that this hot-water jug was one of Mrs. Seaton's most cherished household gods. It portrayed the first chapter of the Book of Ruth. Ruth and Naomi claved to each other under the shadow of the spout, while Orpah returned to her own people in the direction of the handle. The handle itself was one gigantic ear of barley; and on the opposite side of it to that where Orpah and her people evidently dwelt, Boaz reaped with his young men, neatly dressed as English farm-labourers.

"How ever did it happen?" asked Mrs. Seaton in a reproachful tone.

"I was just carrying it with the breakfast cups across the kitchen, and suddenly it smashed itself to bits on the floor."

"But, Martha, I have so often told you not to try to carry so many things at once. It was sure to end in an accident."

"So you have, ma'am; but it seemed as if it was to be."

"It would not have happened if you had done as I told you," said Mrs. Seaton quite sternly.

"That is true, ma'am; but it seemed as if it was to be."

Nothing that her mistress said could convince Martha that she was in any way to blame in the matter. She seemed to regard herself as merely the instrument in a foreordained scheme of destruction; and kept repeating in a tone of grim satisfaction, "it seemed as if it was to be!"

Mrs. Seaton had learned many things in life; and one of them was that feminine argument is always unattractive and generally useless. She was a woman of infinite tact, and took great pains never to hurt people, or even to make them uncomfortable. Her instinct told her what places were sore to the touch; and her religion prevented her from touching the same. She was too good a woman to rejoice secretly at other people's misfortunes, and too clever a one openly to pity them. But all this did not come by nature to Mrs. Seaton; it had taken half a lifetime's experience—and also considerable knowledge—to bring her tact to this state of perfection.

On the present occasion she changed the subject by saying: "We have had good news about Master Paul this morning, Martha".

"Indeed, ma'am, that is a good hearing! What has come to the dear lad?"

"He has won a scholarship at Oxford, and so is going to the University."

"Well, ma'am, that is good news and no mistake! Oxford is a fine place, I hear; and I am told that there's a chapel belonging to each of the colleges, so that the dear young gentleman will not be cut off from the means of grace."

Mrs. Seaton smiled. "The college chapels are not Methodist chapels, however."

"Are they not, ma'am? Well, that's a pity! I thought they were. Still any sort of a chapel is better than a church, to my thinking."

And Mrs. Seaton listened with much amusement while Martha further expounded her views on the subject.

So Paul Seaton went to Oxford, and drank deep into the spirit of a city whose very lawns have to be rolled for five hundred years before they are considered soft enough to walk upon. And there Paul saw visions and dreamed dreams; and because he had been vouchsafed two of the best gifts wherewith Providence can equip a man—namely a religious training and a sense of humour—his dreams were never ignoble and his visions never absurd. He made up his mind to serve God and his generation to the best of his ability, and to make for himself a great name into the bargain; for he was as yet young enough to concoct plans for the conflagration of the river Thames; not knowing that if a man can kindle a fire on his own hearthstone to keep him warm in his old age, he has done his share towards the heating-apparatus of this world, and can count himself among the more successful half of mankind.

Paul also grew lean and tall and vigorous; and was very pleasant to look upon, with his dark hair, grey eyes and well-cut face. He was not a handsome man, strictly speaking; but, as Martha said, "he would pass in a crowd," and he was quite good-looking enough for everyday use.

The years had not dealt quite as kindly with Joanna as with Paul. She was short and thin and colourless; one of those whitey-brown-threads of women who are constantly being overlooked by their friends and neighbours, and whose natural abode is supposed to be the outlying districts of other people's lives. And she took no pains to make herself attractive, as a vainer girl would have done; for she was as yet young enough to cherish that admirable and false belief that folks love us according to our excellencies. We all begin life well grounded in this groundless faith, and we rejoice in it as long as we are youthful enough to fancy that our excellencies will be many; but as we grow older and see how few of these there be, and those not of the finest water, we thank heaven for showing us that the afore-said dogma was nothing but the rankest heresy.

Joanna was the raw material out of which nuns and sisters of mercy are made. Had she belonged to a different faith and a different age, she would have developed into a model lady-abbess. To her, love was a matter of no interest; it formed no part of the programme of life. Such romance as her nature possessed had been lavished upon Mrs. Crozier, the wife of one of the ministers in her father's penultimate circuit. No lover ever adored his mistress, and no devotee his saint, more absorbingly than Joanna adored Mrs. Crozier.

There is always something pathetic in the adoration of a young girl for an older woman; she gives so much.

and can, of necessity, receive so little; yet, with the exception of motherhood, it is perhaps the most unselfish affection which a woman's life can hold. The girl worships with her whole heart, and pours out all the early romance of her nature on this particular shrine; and the woman either suffers this devotion patiently, or snubs it cruelly—according as she happens to be amiable or the reverse.

Mrs. Crozier was kind to Joanna on the whole; but she had not much time to waste on girls, for she was a busy woman.

There are some people who go through life putting all their eggs into one basket. There are others who avoid this mistake, but fall into the equally unlucky one of putting their eggs into baskets which are already full. These erring mortals pour out the treasures of their love at the feet of those whose coffers are overflowing, and spend their days in the thankless task of waiting upon such as are well served. Joanna Seaton was one of these. It was her fate in life to give love where she could only receive friendship, and friendship where she could only receive toleration. Had she given otherwise and elsewhere, her rewards might have been different. But what man or woman can bestow their affection as their wisdom prompts?

Therefore there was a tragic element in Joanna's lot. But when "gorgeous Tragedy" puts off her "sceptred pall" and dresses like a dowdy little spinster, men are too blind to recognize and too hard to pity her. So she bears her burden in silence.

"What do you mean to do when you leave Oxford?" asked Joanna of Paul one day.

"I shall take a First and go to the Bar, and then into Parliament," replied her brother promptly. Paul always

knew his own mind—a branch of knowledge which is useful in this world.

“But suppose you fail?” suggested Joanna.

“I shall not fail.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because I have made up my mind not to fail, but to work at a thing till I succeed. When a man is a failure it is always his own fault.”

“Except when it is God’s; and then failure is better than success,” said Joanna quietly, who knew more about failure—and therefore more about success—than Paul did.

He had still to learn that the man who tries and succeeds is one degree less of a hero than the man who fails and yet goes on trying.

Mr. Martin did not at all approve of Paul Seaton’s going to Oxford: nominally, because he upheld that learning was a dangerous thing for a young man who had his own living to get; and actually, because he could not bear any one else to enjoy such advantages of mind, body or estate as had not been vouchsafed, in still fuller measure, to himself. He therefore spoke a word of warning to the young man one day when Paul happened to be calling at The Cedars.

(The Martins’ house was called The Cedars because there happened to be a yew-tree in the middle of the lawn.)

“My dear Paul,” Mr. Martin began, “I trust that the purely intellectual life in which you are now indulging will in no way unfit you for earning your own living in a suitable and becoming way; nor, on the other hand, lead you into infidelity.”

Paul likewise hoped not, and said so.

“To my mind,” interpolated Mrs. Martin, “there are few more delusive snares than learning, falsely so called.”

This excellent lady had no taste for art or literature, and consequently she considered them wrong. It is so easy—and pleasant—to discover sins lurking in the pursuits for which we are not inclined. Many of us possess wonderful powers of perception in this matter.

"My fear always is that classics and mathematics and rubbish of that kind will disable a man for the more serious business of life," continued Mr. Martin, "and render him incapable of making and earning money."

"But don't you think that they might rather enable a man to earn his own living?" suggested Paul.

Mr. Martin shook his head. "Such things might enable him to earn his own living, perhaps, but never to make a fortune."

"Is it absolutely necessary to human happiness to make a fortune, I wonder?" queried Paul.

Now Mr. Martin was a very good-tempered man, and the causes of his amiable attitude of mind were two-fold—he was very well-off and he was always sure he was in the right; so he had no grounds for a quarrel with anybody. But when people spoke slightly of the good things of this world, he was much shocked: he called it "tempting Providence".

"Wealth is the hall-mark of success," he replied rather shortly; "and poverty is the outward and visible sign of failure."

"I can hardly agree with you there, Mr. Martin. Who ever thinks about how much money Shakespeare or Milton made?"

Mr. Martin regarded this remark as childish, so took no notice of it, but calmly continued: "I once knew a man who began life as an errand-boy; and yet when he died he left half a million of money behind him. Now that is what I call success."

"And I once knew of a man who began life as a free-born citizen of no mean city, and was executed as a prisoner at Rome; and who left no fortune behind him save a few letters. Yet the world hardly calls that man a failure."

"Don't you think it is a little irreverent to apply things out of the Bible to every-day life?" suggested Mrs. Martin in a reproachful tone. "It always grates upon my ear when I hear young people do it."

"It never struck me in that light."

"I fear," added the master of The Cedars, "that too much learning is already leading you into infidelity, and causing you to speak flippantly of sacred matters. As I said before, I cannot commend useless study. In my opinion, if a man has any time to spare from his business he should devote it to religion."

"As you have done, Caleb," remarked his appreciative spouse.

"I have always endeavoured to do so, my dear; and that, I take it, is the reason why my investments are almost invariably successful."

Mr. Martin was one of the men who act up to their convictions. Early in life he had undertaken the difficult task of combining the service of God and Mammon. For some ten hours a day he worked hard at making and amassing money; but his "off-time" he devoted conscientiously to heaven; and he considered that, on the whole, heaven had nothing to complain of in the arrangement.

It is but fair to add that Caleb Martin endeavoured, according to his lights, to do his duty to both the powers under whom he served; but, if the two interests did happen to clash, it was never Mammon that came short. Otherwise, perhaps, he would not have been such a rich man.

"My husband has never cared for pleasure," continued Mrs. Martin; "and many a time when I considered that a little relaxation would be good for him, he has said to me, 'My religion is my recreation, Sarah'. And he has always made it so."

"I have indeed," replied Mr. Martin modestly; "though I do not think, my dear, that you should thus proclaim my virtues upon the house-top. It may seem just a little boastful to one not of our own household."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Martin considered that the latter's description of her husband was unadulterated praise. It never occurred to either of them that any one in heaven or on earth would not consider it as such. It also never occurred to them that they were being at all humorous.

"You have certainly succeeded even beyond your deserts, Mr. Martin," remarked Paul with much sincerity.

The excellent Caleb waved his hand in a deprecatory manner. "I have received my penny a day," he replied; "neither more nor less."

As a matter of fact he was at that moment receiving about nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings and eleven pence more than his penny a day; but it never does to press a metaphor too far.

Then Mrs. Martin chimed in with the remark: "You will do well to think upon Mr. Martin's words, my dear Paul. At Oxford you are doubtless exposed to other pernicious influences in addition to that of infidelity, as you are thrown much with young persons who have been nurtured in the pride of high rank and of noble blood—a most subtle and dangerous form of sin, to my thinking."

Paul much regretted that Joanna was not present. She always appreciated Mrs. Martin so warmly, and she had frequently called attention to the fact (now *en évidence*) that in the spiritual world the special dangers

which beset our neighbours seem so much more terrible than those which beset ourselves. The latter are but pardonable weaknesses, we think ; but the former are mortal sins. Thus we pray that we may be delivered from pitfalls which have no attraction for us, and we hope that Providence will be so much engaged in attending to the fulfilment of this prayer, that our slips and stumbles into the little hollows which we affect will pass unnoticed.

"Pride of birth is a dreadful besetment," continued Mrs. Martin ; "and one which I pray may never be laid to my charge." Which certainly seemed an almost superfluous petition, considering the lineage of the suppliant.

The Martins were very anxious to be delivered from the temptations arising from such mundane blessings as had been denied them ; but it never seemed to occur to them to pray for exemption from the love of money.

"I suppose all worldly gifts become besetments if we give them a primary instead of a secondary place," suggested Paul, "and if we confuse essentials with non-essentials."

"Quite so, quite so," agreed Mr. Martin ; "and it is this thought which gives us parents so much anxiety when we look forward into our children's future—this fear that the young people may, in their ignorance, fling away the substance for the sake of the shadow ; as a young friend of mine once did, who refused a partnership in an excellent business in order to become a missionary."

"What happened to him eventually?" asked Paul.

Mr. Martin heaved a sigh of sincere regret. "He died—a comparatively young man—somewhere in the South Seas. And if he had taken my advice and stayed at home, he might have been the mayor of his native

town by this time. But young folks will not be controlled."

"Still I can't help thinking that on the whole it is as fine a thing to be a martyr as to be a mayor," Paul remarked.

But Mr. Martin considered this remark irreverent.

"Mr. Martin is right," sighed the mistress of The Cedars; "though for my part, I desire for my one ewe lamb neither riches nor honour; I only ask that she may be wise and happy."

And then the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Alice, who blushed very becomingly on perceiving Paul; while Mrs. Martin—having noted the blush—was straightway plunged into a very maelström of maternal unrest, lest the one ewe lamb, for whom she desired neither riches nor honour, should seek happiness with the impecunious son of a minister of religion.

CHAPTER II.

Alice.

I will own you as my prince
In the sight of heaven,
For I've loved you ever since
I was six or seven.

IN consequence of her daughter's incriminating blush, Mrs. Martin set herself to the not uncommon task of locking a stable door after the steed has been stolen. But it was too late. Alice loved Paul Seaton, and felt that to be with him and to hear his voice was ideal happiness. As for Paul, he liked his old playmate because she thought him infallible and because she was pleasant to look upon; but his time for love was not yet.

Men and women approach the great subject of love by such different roads. The normal woman begins her life by raising an altar to an unknown god, and dedicates it to the first handsome stranger who comes her way, as the niche over the shrine is generally what shop-keepers call "stock size". Worship is the leading motive of her existence: the particular idol whom she happens to adore is a mere matter of circumstance.

But with a man it is different. In his case the goddess appears prior to the altar; and it is only after he has met and fallen down before the one, that he recognizes the necessity of erecting the other.

Alice Martin was an extremely pretty girl; and reminded one of a picture by Romney, with her soft brown hair and eyes to match. She was also sweet and good and restful; and possessed the power of making happy any man who happened to love her. She also possessed the power of loving almost any man—provided that he was kind and agreeable, and always on the spot: for—let poets and novelists say what they will in favour of manly beauty and manly prowess—it is not the man of war or the man of genius that carries the day with the majority of women, but the man who happens to be on the spot.

“I don’t think Miss Alice is looking well; do you, Martha?” asked Joanna of her faithful handmaid one day.

“Far from it, miss, far from it. I passed the remark only the other day to Mrs. Martin’s cook, that Miss Alice had just the same look that my niece Keren-happuch Tozer had; and in three weeks after that, Keren-happuch was a corpse,” assented Martha cheerfully.

Joanna suppressed a smile. “Oh! I don’t think she is as bad as that, Martha; but she looks to me as if she were fretting about something.”

“May be she is, my dear. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, as Solomon said; and a wounded spirit is as a broken tooth, as it were.”

“I sometimes wonder if she is in love with Paul,” remarked Paul’s sister thoughtfully.

“Well, to be sure, miss, what an idea! Yet Master Paul is a likely enough lad for any maid to fancy, bless his heart!”

“Falling in love seems a great bother, don’t you think, Martha?”

“I should just think it is, my dear, and no mistake.

I'm thankful to say I always kept clear of rubbish of that kind. I've had too much to do, what with preparing your dear papa's meals, and keeping the circuit's furniture in good order, to waste my time in thinking of men and love and fallals of that sort."

"I have made up my mind that I shall never marry," said Joanna.

"And I, for one, don't blame you; for what with throwing matches into the grates, and walking on the carpets with muddy boots, and sitting on the antimacassars and crumpling them up, there's nothing makes as much dirt in a house as a man. They are far worse than dogs or children, in my opinion."

"Besides," mused Joanna, "I am not pretty enough to get married."

"Bless you, my dear, that's neither here nor there! If Providence ordains that you'll be married, married you'll be, if you've got a face like a turnip and a figure like a bolster. As I once passed the remark to my sister Eliza Ann—'Eliza Ann,' says I, 'you're the plainest woman I ever set eyes on, and you've got the best husband: which is nothing short of a miracle'."

Joanna smiled. "Did not Eliza Ann feel hurt at your saying that?"

"Not she: Eliza Ann was far too godly a woman to care for such an earthly snare as beauty, or to spend her days in plaiting her hair and putting on of apparel, like the beasts that perish."

"Where is Eliza Ann now?" asked Joanna.

"She went with her husband to Australia some years ago."

"Do you often hear from her?"

"Now and again, miss, when she has the time; but what with one thing and another her days are pretty full.

She and her husband wanted me to go out and join them at one time; but I said that unless they could promise that I should sleep every night on land in a four-post bed, I would not undertake the journey. It may be all very well to go travelling by day, when you can see where you are going to; but travelling by night is only for such as love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."

Joanna Seaton had an admirable sense of humour; and therefore always encouraged Martha when the latter was inclined, like the moon, to take up her wondrous tale, and relate the story of her earlier experiences.

"Your sister, Eliza Ann, must have been a woman of strong character," said Joanna suggestively.

"Indeed she was, my dear, and no mistake. She was such a leading light in the Grampton circuit that it was considered due to her piety to ask her to do the cutting-out at the Dorcas-meeting. But piety and cutting-out don't always go together, more's the pity!"

"I suppose they don't."

"Far from it. There was once great distress in Grampton, owing to bad trade coupled with a deep snow; and Brother Phipson gave a roll of cloth to make clothes for ragged little boys; Brother Phipson being a cloth-merchant by nature and a circuit-steward by grace."

"It was very kind of him to give garments to the poor," said Joanna approvingly.

"He was but an unprofitable servant, like the rest of us," sighed Martha: "when we have done all we can, our righteousness is but filthy rags hanging on barren fig-trees."

"Did your sister cut out all the little boys' clothes?"

"Well, it was in this way, miss. Eliza Ann was such a saint that it would not have been seemly for any other

member of the congregation to do the cutting-out while she was present. So she was appointed to the work. But her mind was so full of the last Sunday evening's sermon, that she cut out all the trousers for the same leg."

Joanna laughed outright. "I suppose she was in a great way when she found out what she had done."

"Not she, my dear," replied Martha, somewhat reprovingly; "Eliza Ann was far too religious a woman to own to anybody but her Maker that she had been in the wrong."

"Then what did she do?"

"She said what she had done she had done for the best, but it was always her fate to be misunderstood, so she supposed she must take it as her cross and not complain. She had endeavoured not to let her left hand know what her right hand was doing, and this was the consequence. Oh! she was terribly hurt, was Eliza Ann—and no wonder!—when the young minister told her that, according to his ideas, trousers (like opinions) should not be one-sided. It was so painful, she said, when men reviled her and condemned her, after she had acted as she thought for the best."

"What was the end of it all?" Joanna asked.

"The end was, miss, that Brother Phipson heard what had happened, and gave another roll of cloth to make the other legs; so that all things worked together for good, and there was double the number of pairs that there would have been if the cutting-out had not been done by Eliza Ann."

"She really must have been a gifted person!"

"Oh! Eliza Ann was a godly woman, and no mistake," confessed Martha, with pardonable pride; "and still is, I doubt not, a sea-voyage having no power to change the human heart. But she was none too easy

to get on with, when things were going smooth. Though I say it as shouldn't—being her sister—there were times when Eliza Ann's religion was trying to the flesh of them she had to do with."

"Did her husband think it so?" queried Joanna.

"Oh, my dear, what a question to ask! As if it mattered what he thought! Eliza Ann was far too sensible to allow him to give his opinion about anything. 'If you let a husband begin to pass remarks,' she used to say, 'it is the thin end of the wedge which in time will turn again and rend you.' So Eliza Ann avoided the first appearance of evil."

"But she was really good, you say?"

"Good, my dear? Of course she was good! Who ever thought anything different?" exclaimed Martha, who had never read Milton's line, "He for God only; she for God in him," and would have called it "rubbish" if she had. "I assure you, miss, Eliza Ann was not one to keep the outside of the cup and platter clean, while the inside was filled with ravening wolves and dead men's bones. Though she might be aggravating, as it were, in times of prosperity, in the day of adversity she never failed nor fell short."

Joanna nodded.

"Now, in the case of Mr. Sweeting," continued Martha, "him that so far forgot himself as to say that trousers should be two-sided, you know. As long as he waxed fat and kicked, and was filled with pride and vain-glory, Eliza Ann would have nothing to say to him. But when he fell sick of the small-pox, and there was no woman to look after him—his mother being dead, and his step-mother living at such a distance and caring more for the things of this life than for her husband's first family (which was all sons)—Eliza Ann went and

nursed him herself, and if it had not been for her the poor young man would have died."

"Did she escape the infection?" asked Joanna anxiously.

"Not she. As soon as Mr. Sweeting was pretty well, Eliza Ann caught the complaint and had a terrible time. And when she got well again she found her face was disfigured, and her beautiful hair all cut off."

"Oh, how sad!" cried Joanna. "Was she pretty before her illness?"

"No, my dear; far from it. She was always a plain woman at the best of times, but the small-pox left her positively ugly. She really had had beautiful hair; but when it grew again it all came grey. Perhaps her hair, being her one beauty, might have proved a snare to her; so the Lord saw fit to remove it, lest she herself—having saved others—should become a castaway."

"Did she mind much when she found her face was so disfigured?" Joanna asked: "and did she regret what she had done?"

"Never once, miss. Eliza Ann is not one of the regretting sort. She does what she thinks right, and leaves Providence to take the consequences. The first time I saw her after her illness, 'My conscience alive, Eliza Ann,' says I, 'you are a figure of fun!' 'Martha,' says she, 'the Lord called me to nurse that poor, misguided young man; and was I going to let the thought of my vile body come between me and the Lord's work?' That was how Eliza Ann looked at the matter; and it was the sensible view to my thinking."

Joanna's eyes filled with tears; self-sacrifice—even in Eliza Anns—always touched her.

"I hope you said something comforting to your sister, Martha."

"Yes, miss, I did, and something edifying too, I trust. 'Eliza Ann,' says I, 'if you have been ugly here, you will be handsome enough in heaven, never fear. Much beauty you never had; but, such as it was, you gave it to the Lord, and He will pay it back in His own good time!'"

"Then do you think that what we give up here will be made up to us hereafter?"

"Certainly so," replied Martha cheerfully: "the Lord tells us in His Holy Word to owe no man anything; so it isn't likely that He will remain in debt Himself. Trust Him, if we give Him our health or wealth or beauty, it will be repaid, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold."

"I wonder if we shall all be beautiful in heaven?" said Joanna.

"Of course we shall, my dear, if we want to be," replied Martha; "if the Lord lets us wish for anything very much, He means to fulfil that wish, either in this world or the next, or else He would never let us go on wishing it."

"Then do you think that every one will be made good-looking in heaven?"

"I do, Miss Joanna. It will be a big job with some of us, I admit; but the Lord will manage it, never fear."

"Still it seems wrong and selfish, somehow, to wish very much for beauty," persisted Joanna, who, being younger and less wise than her mother, was addicted to argument. "Mrs. Martin was talking about this the other day, and she said she considered the mere desire to be beautiful was a form of sinful vanity."

"Perhaps she is of a contented disposition, and has brought her mind to her circumstances, as the saying is," suggested Martha, who always scented battle at the mere mention of Mrs. Martin. This excellent lady had a

wonderful knack of teaching people their place—a form of education which does not add to the popularity of the instructor.

“She said that wealth was a higher gift than beauty,” continued Joanna thoughtfully, “because it could be used for the benefit of others, while beauty was only a personal possession; and she told me that she had often felt it right to pray to the Lord for riches, because she needed them to carry on His work.”

“She never took Him in with that, I’ll be bound,” murmured Martha, with an ominous shake of the head; “but it was just like her to try it on.”

“I suppose we ought not to mind whether we are rich or poor, or handsome or plain,” mused Joanna aloud; “for this life is, after all, only an anteroom to the next one. Our happiness or unhappiness here is really a question of no moment; what really matters is whether we are using our happiness or unhappiness as a fit preparation for the life to come.”

“Quite true, my dear,” commented Martha; “as long as sick folk get well, it doesn’t signify to them whether they are cured by sweet syrups or by bitter drugs. It is the cure that matters, not the medicine.”

Joanna nodded her head approvingly: Martha’s uncompromising sense of justice always appealed to her.

“Them as think too much of this present life and all its vanities,” continued Martha, “remind me of my poor father, the first time he travelled by rail. It was to see his sister who lived at Folwich. ‘Now, Joshua,’ says mother to him, ‘whatever you do, don’t sit down on them comfortable seats and fall asleep, but remember that you are a stranger and a sojourner.’ ‘All right, missis,’ says father; and then—like a man—did exactly the opposite to what he’d been told. Oh! they are

tiresome creatures, men are. If you look after their health, they say you are fussy; and if you don't, they are all dead corpses. Eh! but there is no peace for a married woman, save in the grave; and not even there, I doubt, unless he has been took first, and so she knows he is out of harm's way."

"Then don't you think that men are able to take care of themselves?" asked Joanna.

"My conscience alive, miss! You, who have got a father of your own, to ask such a question as that! Still there is some excuse for you, seeing that your father is a minister, and so not quite like other men. But even a call to the ministry don't make a man equal to a woman, to my thinking; though it is better than nothing, as you may say."

"What happened to your father on his first journey? That is what you were telling me."

"So I was, miss, so I was. Well, as I was saying, mother told father not to make himself too comfortable on his journey, or worse would come of it. She owned afterwards that she had been foolish not to see that forbidding a thing was just suggesting to him to do it, and putting fresh mischief into his head; for the moment she forgot she was speaking to a man, and treated him as a reasonable being—which she ought to have known better, being a married woman."

"Then did he disobey her?" inquired Joanna.

"Naturally, my dear, he did. No sooner did father start on his journey, out of reach of mother's eye, than he sat down on them seats and went fast asleep, and he didn't wake up again till he'd gone five stations past Folwich."

"Oh dear!"

"It was 'oh dear!' and no mistake; for he had to

wait at Brayford four hours for the next train back, and then had to come straight home again without seeing his sister at all, besides having to pay the extra fare, which came to five and threepence. Mother said he was a type of them that have their portion in this life, and are so busy making the best of the wilderness that they pass by the promised land without even seeing the name of the station."

So Joanna and her old nurse—like the true Methodists that they were—talked familiarly together about holy things; and this familiarity arose not from any lightness or irreverence, but from the fact that to them such things were so near and so real that they became as household words.

The Methodists of the past generation lived always with their lamps lit and their loins girded, as those that wait for their Lord; and they sought so diligently for the True that they had no leisure to look for the Beautiful, for it had not yet been revealed to them that the True and the Beautiful are one. They were so fearful of confounding the substance with the shadow that they did not altogether realize that the shadow is after all but the reflection of the substance, and therefore a revelation of the same; and they gazed so steadfastly into heaven that they were in danger of forgetting how God made the earth as well as the heavens and saw that it was good. To their ears there was no message in the wind or the earthquake or the fire; but they heard clearly the still small Voice, and they did whatsoever it commanded them.

And we need not pity them overmuch that some of the beauty and poetry of life was hid from their eyes. They that seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness know no abiding lack; for all these things shall be added unto them.

Now it happened that Martha was not the only person who had noticed Alice's delicate appearance. Alice's mother had likewise perceived it, and it had struck a cold chill to the maternal heart; for human nature is stronger than worldly ambition or religious prejudice—is stronger in fact than most things—and human nature has much that is good in it, as well as much that is not quite so good. Therefore Mrs. Martin's comfortable view of life—with an equally comfortable view of heaven in the background—lost all its beauty and symmetry when her careful eye perceived a tiny hollow appearing in Alice's cheek. Nevertheless the hollow remained, as "Paul Seaton his mark," and Mrs. Martin was powerless to remove it.

As for Paul himself, he was too much occupied with books and boating and such important matters to notice whether a girl's cheek were thin or the reverse; and he would have been extremely surprised and annoyed to learn that he possessed the right to excavate in so delicate a field; for in his second year at Oxford he became captain of his college boat, having proved his prowess on the river; and he was happier then than he ever had been, or probably ever would be again.

To Paul Seaton rowing was no mere pastime; at that time it was to him a sign and type of all that was best in life and human nature; and though in after years the type changed, the thing which rowing then represented was ever the greatest thing in the world to Paul.

"I cannot understand how you can care so much about an amusement," said Joanna one day, as she and Paul and Alice were sitting in the garden at The Cedars.

Paul flushed. "It isn't just an amusement; to me it is a lot more than that."

"I don't see how amusement can be anything more

than amusement," persisted Joanna. "And to care too much about a pastime seems to me as wrong as to care too much about pleasure."

"Oh! can't you understand?" cried her brother. "Can't you see that in boating, as in everything else in life, there is considerably more than the thing itself? Of course rowing is a glorious exercise, and a fellow thoroughly enjoys it; but besides that, there is the *esprit de corps*, and the desire to have one's boat first on the river, and all that sort of thing, don't you know?"

"I see," said Alice.

"I don't think you girls realize how awfully it matters to a fellow that his college boat should be first. Why, I've seen men get soaked through, and yet forget all about themselves, and not care a rap how cold and damp they were—nor how ill they made themselves—as long as their boat won."

"I know," said Alice.

Now, as a matter of fact, Alice did not know one bit better than Joanna did; but she used her eyes much and her tongue little, and consequently had the reputation of being an extremely sympathetic young person. She had a pretty way of looking interested and of saying, "Yes, I know"; and women who do these things are beloved both by their own sex and the other. Alice was not insincere in thus doing. Her sympathy extended over a far wider area than her comprehension; and her eyes were truthful in the interest they expressed, though her brain did not grasp the why and wherefore of this interest.

Alice felt more than she understood, and Joanna understood more than she felt; consequently—and deservedly—Alice won more love from her kind than Joanna did; for the world is fair to people as a rule, and with what measure they mete it is measured to them withal.

To a woman a heart is a more remunerative investment than a head, and a much more satisfactory possession; yet women are slow to perceive this. If only the women who have sufficient wit to say nasty things, had just so much more wit as would prevent them from saying the same, the world would be a pleasanter place, and the men who have married stupid wives would have less cause for self-congratulation than they have at present. For in a woman—as in a lemon—bitterness is an unpardonable defect; men, on the contrary—like grouse—are all the nicer for a flavour of it.

"To me," remarked Joanna obstinately, "rowing is merely a violent form of the 'bodily exercise' which 'profiteth little'; I cannot see anything else in it. I can understand that a man should want his own college to produce the best scholars in the university; but I cannot see how it can matter whether his boat is first on the river or not."

Paul groaned. "It is the firstness that matters, don't you see? whether it applies to the schools or the river."

"I see no credit in being first in mere physical things," said Joanna, who was small and weak.

"Well, I do then," replied Paul, who was tall and strong.

"I think it is nice to do things well, whether they are physical or mental," added Alice, who was amiable.

"It is awfully jolly to feel you are in good form," replied Paul, pinching his biceps.

"I'd far rather be a genius than the strongest man in the world," said his sister.

"Would you?" argued Paul. "I can't say that I would. I'd rather have been Achilles in the thick of the fight, than Homer writing about him. Still success

in anything is a fine thing—about the finest thing in the world, I suppose—and it must be glorious for a man to feel himself a head and shoulders above his fellows in any sphere!”

“You think too much about success,” said Joanna gravely; “the great thing, it seems to me, is to do one’s duty, and not bother about the results. I can imagine failure’s being a better thing than success, under certain circumstances.”

Paul shrugged his shoulders. “Well, I can’t; and at any rate I hope my portion in life will be the inferior one you call success.”

“I am sure it will be,” added Alice; “you are so awfully clever that there is no doubt that you will succeed in whatever you undertake, just as you have done in the boating.”

“Which, as I said before, doesn’t seem to me a sort of success worth having,” said the unbending Joanna.

Joanna laboured under a not uncommon delusion that there is a special virtue in upholding any opinion in the face of opposition; and that the oftener one reiterates the opinion, and the more unacceptable it is, the greater is the virtue. To the masculine mind this habit of thought is trying; and Paul found it specially so when it ran right across his boyish enthusiasms. Though he was as yet too young to know all that he had learnt, the river had already taught him more than the schools; it had shown him the necessity for self-imposed discipline, implicit obedience, regular work, strong endurance, stern self-denial and unity of aim and interest; and even if he were unable as yet to realize all this—still less to express it—Joanna’s disapproval of his greatest delight partook of the nature of sacrilege in Paul’s eyes.

“It’s no use talking to you of things which you don’t

understand," he said crossly; Paul's temper—like canal bridges—never being equal to bearing more than "the ordinary traffic of the district".

"I don't wonder that you enjoy rowing so much, Paul, for it must be so nice on the river these lovely afternoons," interpolated Alice, ever ready to make peace.

But Paul was not so easily appeased. "Nice on the river!" he grumbled; "what an expression! Girls never have an idea of anything better or higher than what they call nice."

Which was very unjust, as well as very disagreeable; for Joanna's visions of duty and Alice's dreams of love were quite equal, from an ethical point of view, to Paul's heroics; but of course Paul did not know this. If he had, he would have been thirty instead of twenty, and wise at that.

"If I were a man I should love to be big and strong," persisted the peacemaker. "It seems just as right for a man to be strong as for a woman to be beautiful."

"I wonder if beautiful women are much happier than plain ones," remarked Joanna.

"Of course they are," replied Alice, "because people love them more, and love is the only thing that really makes a woman happy."

Joanna shook her head. "I don't see that. Your own people will love you whether you are plain or whether you are pretty; and it seems to me to have a lot of outsiders fond of you would be a bother rather than a pleasure."

"But don't you like people to be fond of you?" asked Alice.

"Not unless I am fond of them. When comparative strangers kiss me and gush over me I feel so dreadfully uncomfortable I don't know what to do. There was a

very gushing woman in our last circuit who used to hold my hand for hours together."

"I shouldn't have minded that," said Alice.

Joanna laughed. "But I did: I was simply paralyzed with terror; every time she gave my hand a squeeze, I squeezed back; and if my squeeze hadn't been quite as hard as hers, I felt as if I were in debt and ought to be county-courted."

Paul was dreadfully bored by this style of conversation. He was not sufficiently in love with Alice to care to discuss emotions with her; for a man does not like to talk about feelings, except to the woman he happens to be in love with—and then he only does it to please her, and wishes to goodness she would select some other topic.

It was a very happy life at Chayford just then, especially to Joanna. Each day was full—but not too full—of duties; and nearly every evening there was some mild religious excitement to take the minister's family out, and prevent life from ever seeming dull. There were the week-evening service and the class-meeting and the prayer-meeting and the Dorcas-meeting—four full nights for certain; and there often came little irregular and extra means of grace for the other evenings of the week; so that every day there was the pleasant feeling that something was going to happen after tea.

This cheerful and busy type of existence exactly suited Joanna; it satisfied her completely, and she had no longings for anything different—neither much patience with the people who had.

But Alice dreamed dreams of a fuller life, which was not hers at all, but Paul's; a life devoted to adoring Paul when he succeeded, and adoring him still more when he failed. She was content to stand afar off among the

crowd who were eager to crown Paul as victor in the days of his triumph, if only she might have the right to come near and comfort him in times of failure and humiliation. She fully believed that Paul was one of the greatest men alive, and would prove himself such to the world in general; but she would not have loved him a whit less—but rather more—had she thought him doomed to fail in everything that he undertook. Paul was Paul—that was enough for her; if the world did not do him justice, so much the worse for the world.

As for Paul himself, he knew nothing of Alice's girlish devotion to him, and would not have thanked her for it if he had. He meant to succeed; so the love that beareth all things and never faileth, was not an article for which he had any use. The admiration that success is bound to command was more in his line at present; and that, of course, one demands as one's right, and never thanks anybody for. To Paul just then the love that endures and is patient was as uninteresting as chrysanthemums and china-asters would be in spring. There comes a time when we cherish chrysanthemums and china-asters—even of the most ordinary sort; but that is not till the violets and the roses and the lilies are all faded.

CHAPTER III.

Two Kings in Brentford.

I'll take your part when you are wrong ;
I'll fight your battles to the end ;
I'll listen when you sing a song,
And never count your tales too long ;
Because you are my friend.

IT has a very pretty effect in dancing the Lancers when the dancers "set to corners"; but when our hearts, and the affections thereof, take it upon themselves to perform this particular figure, the effect is not so satisfactory. Yet it is a figure towards the dancing of which these members much incline. Therefore it happened that while Alice Martin was breaking her heart for love of Paul Seaton, Edgar Ford was breaking his for love of Alice Martin.

Surely Fate—when Fate is pleased to be ironical—displays a most ingenious and whimsical sense of humour. And it happened that Fate was just now sharpening this particular sense at the expense of Mr. and Mrs. Martin. This worthy couple generally liked things to be done at their expense, it sounded so lavish and princely; but this was carrying matters a little too far.

Paul, being poor, was *anathema* to Mr. and Mrs. Martin; and Edgar, being rich, was their hearts' desire; and yet Alice loved Paul and was indifferent to Edgar;

and in consequence there appeared that disturbing little hollow in Alice's pretty cheek.

The Fords were the most important people in Chayford, and had been rich merchants there for several generations. Edgar's great-grandfather was a friend of John Wesley's; and the great little man had preached the gospel under the huge cedar on the lawn of Chayford House. Consequently at Chayford Chapel the Fords sat in the farthest-back pew, this being ever considered the most august seat—the Woolsack in fact—of Methodist chapels; and their place in the sanctuary was rendered yet more glorious by a brazen fence, wherefrom dangled a sort of short, red moreen petticoat, which ran all along the top of their pew, and so screened the prayers of the Ford family from the prying and plebeian eyes of the rest of the congregation. Mrs. Ford pronounced the "Open Sesame" at all the Welseyan bazaars and sales-of-work within a radius of ten miles round Chayford; and on such occasions she was specially introduced to the divine notice by the officiating minister under the pseudonym of "an handmaid". As a child Edgar had no idea what this expression exactly meant (neither, perhaps, had the officiating minister), but he felt extremely proud of his mother when he heard her alluded to in this way; and when the minister's prayer was more than usually embracing, and included Edgar himself under the title of "her offspring," Edgar's spiritual arrogance knew no bounds.

If the Seatons were as the salt of Methodism, the Fords were as the cream of it. Their social position fitted them for this life, and their religious fervour for the next. They neither hated the world as did Mark Seaton, nor worshipped it as did Caleb Martin. On the whole they very fairly rendered to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, and

to God the things that were God's; and to do this, men must know something about Cæsar and also something about God.

Edgar was now the only child of the house of Ford, two little sisters having exchanged earth for heaven, and taken their mother's heart along with them. Like all Nonconformists, Edgar Ford inclined to overscrupulousness rather than to laxity. He was ready to sacrifice everything to his principles—which was right; but he sometimes mistook his prejudices for his principles—which was tiresome. Looked at in the light of eternity, Edgar's conduct was always eminently satisfactory; but looked at in the light of earth, it was sometimes a little trying. A college friend of his once said that "Ford was suffering from fatty degeneration of the conscience"; and Edgar's conscience certainly was abnormally enlarged. When great issues were at stake, this extreme and sensitive conscientiousness made Edgar Ford a prince among men; but when one was dealing with less important matters, and lawfulness was not so much the question to be considered as expediency, Edgar's custom of hair-splitting was somewhat paralyzing in its effects. He would hardly let himself do right for fear of doing wrong; which morbid introspection was partly the result of a Puritan training and ancestry, and partly of a delicate digestion.

For the rest, Edgar was "a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day". He was fair and slight and good-looking; and the shyness and sensitiveness which caused his own feelings to be so often hurt, made him specially careful not to hurt other people's. He did not talk much; but always left one with the impression that he had been extremely interesting, though one could not recall a word that he had said. His silence was more interesting than most men's conversation; and his pride

less aggressive than most men's humility. Yet he was very silent and excessively proud. For people in general he cared not at all; he was too shy to understand and too sensitive to defy them; but for the few for whom he did care, his patience was exhaustless and his love unfailing; nothing that they might do could estrange them from him.

Martha once remarked, "When Master Edgar dies of old age, Master Paul will shake in his shoes"; which was her cheerful and picturesque way of notifying the fact that Edgar was Paul's senior by only a few months. Owing to this similarity of age and diversity of temperament, a firm friendship had sprung up between the two boys, which grew with their growth and strengthened with their strength.

In every respect these two differed from each other. While Paul knew neither shyness nor self-consciousness, Edgar was a prey to both; while Paul took out his own feelings and examined them and talked about them, Edgar kept his shut up in the secret chambers of his soul. Paul was more sure of himself when he was in the wrong than Edgar was when he was in the right; and while Paul was inclined to ride rough-shod over other people, Edgar was as tender as the tenderest woman. When Paul made up his mind to take a certain path, he took it all the more determinedly if there were lions in the way, and regarded the worsting of these interfering beasts as the best part of the sport; but if there were lions in Edgar's way, he hesitated about taking that path at all—not because he was afraid of lions, or of anything else under the sun save sin, but because he regarded the presence of these "fearful wild-fowl" as a divine intimation that such a path was not for his treading. Consequently Paul possessed the ele-

ments of success, if by success one means fame and wealth and the getting of one's own way; while Edgar's was one of the natures foredoomed to failure, if by failure one means nothing in this world but knowledge of the truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. Which are the common interpretations of the words success and failure as used among men.

With all the intensity of a deep and refined and somewhat narrow nature, Edgar Ford loved Alice. He did not inwardly examine himself to see the why and wherefore of this love, as Paul would have done; he merely knew that Alice Martin was all the world to him, and would be so, as long as he and the world lasted. It was characteristic of the two men that Paul analyzed his feelings, but took his motives for granted; while Edgar carefully weighed and examined his principles, and left his feelings to take care of themselves—knowing that they were strong enough to do that, and a good deal more into the bargain. Edgar always knew what he wanted, but not always what he ought to do; Paul, on the contrary, always knew what he thought right, but not always what he thought desirable.

Now if Edgar had been as wise as he was good, he would have carried on his love-making regardless of Paul, and would then and there have won Alice for himself. And that plan would have been the best for everybody concerned; for Alice was not capable of holding Paul, even if she could win him; and she was not the woman to make Paul happy, even if he deluded himself into fancying that he loved her; while Edgar was quite equal to supplanting Paul in Alice's affection, and making her and himself thereby happy ever after, if only he had realized that "all is fair in love and war," and had set about things in the right way. But unfortunately it was

not Edgar's habit to set about things in the right way. First, he reasoned with himself that Alice's happiness was the great thing to be considered, and that Alice's happiness was bound up in Paul; for poor Edgar's eye had been as quick as Mrs. Martin's to discover that tell-tale little hollow in Alice's cheek; and that therefore his very love for Alice constrained him not to come between her and the thing she coveted. Then he further decided that, as Paul's friend, he was in honour bound not to stand in Paul's light, should Paul eventually discover how extremely pretty Alice was. And finally he made up his mind to immolate himself upon the joint altar of love and friendship; and it never occurred to him that the flames of this sacrifice were likely to burn up Paul and Alice's happiness as well as his own.

In Edgar's anxiety to leave Alice quite free, he strove his utmost to hide from her the fact that he loved her; he had an idea that in so doing he was taking the most honourable course towards her and towards Paul. And he pursued this course with such success that Alice thought him stuck-up and ill-tempered, and confided the same to Paul, who—with more common sense and equally little perception—decided that he was only bilious.

As for Paul, he had as yet no more idea that Edgar cared for Alice than that Alice cared for himself. Such things were as yet unknown to him, though it was gradually dawning upon him that Alice was extremely good-looking and very easy to talk to.

But the rest of the world were not so blind as Paul; and even Miss Drusilla Dallicot, the spinster *par excellence* of Chayford, had some inkling as to how matters stood.

Miss Drusilla's "mind to her a kingdom was," and she prided herself upon the elegance of her diction and

the refinement of her style. She was a very learned little lady, and never used a word of one syllable if a synonym of three could be found in the dictionary. She lived entirely in the literature of the past, and resolutely refused—on any pretext whatever—to come down later than the eighteenth century.

In addition to the kingdom of her mind, Miss Dallicot ruled over a nice fortune of her own, and she gave freely to "the cause" at Chayford. She was extremely particular in her habits; and while her godliness was indisputable, her cleanliness was virulent. No visitors were allowed to enter her abode until they had been rubbed down with a clothes-brush and a duster in the back-hall; and even then they were rarely admitted into the sanctum of her drawing-room, lest they should by their presence soil the chintz covers therein. What was to be seen underneath those chintz covers was an impenetrable secret. It was rumoured in Chayford that grass-green satin was the underlying texture, but this was as purely traditional as the site of the Garden of Eden, or the date of the building of Babel. No living man or woman had seen Miss Dallicot's drawing-room furniture face to face.

"My dear young friend," said Miss Drusilla to Joanna Seaton one day, when the minister's daughter was having tea with her in her spotless dining-room; preparation for the feast having been made by the spreading of a serviette all over the visitor's lap, and of a small floorcloth under the visitor's chair, lest an unwary crumb should escape from its moorings and rush headlong on to the carpet; "has it ever presented itself to your imagination that an attachment of a sentimental character might possibly arise between your gifted and talented brother and that amiable young creature, Alice Martin?"

"I believe that Alice thinks Paul very clever, and I know that Paul thinks Alice very pretty," replied Joanna guardedly.

"Perhaps it is scarcely seemly of me to introduce so romantic, though interesting, a subject to a person as yet as youthful and innocent as yourself; yet my deep reverence for my spiritual pastor, and my sincere attachment to his attractive family, cause me to experience the warmest concern in anything which affects either his interest or theirs."

"It is very good of you, dear Miss Dallicot, to take so friendly an interest in all of us; and your kind sympathy is fully appreciated. Father was saying only yesterday that he counts you among his truest, as well as his cleverest, friends; for he has never been disappointed either in your heart or your head. You know how he enjoys a chat about books with you, and how much good it does him."

"Your words, thus fitly spoken, are indeed as apples of gold in pictures of silver. The praise of so gifted a man as your father is too high a tribute to such feeble powers as I may possess; yet the suffrage of one who combines the noble qualities of a true gentleman with the high vocation of a minister of religion, is an encouragement to any thoughtful mind to follow his guidance into the realms of knowledge."

Now Joanna detested gossip above all things, having already learnt that no good can come of it, but much evil: so she wisely endeavoured to drive her hostess still further into the realms of knowledge, so as to keep her from inquisitively wandering into the fields of romance.

"Have you been reading anything new lately?" she asked with much subtlety.

"Nay, my dear Joanna, new books and new writers

are alike abhorrent to my literary taste ; and I dislike the one as cordially as I despise the other. To me my Plato and my Aristotle are ever fresh ; and if I desire to provide my mind with suitable relaxation, are not Walter Scott and Jane Austen ever at hand to plume my wings for a flight into the world of fiction ? ”

“ But don’t you think that novels of all kinds—provided of course that they are good ones—help one to understand human nature ? ”

“ You must first prove to me that a fuller understanding of human nature is a ‘ consummation devoutly to be wished ’ ; for my own part I cannot see that it forms a specially interesting or instructive branch of study. That human nature is in but a sorry condition at present, is my conviction : that it will some day rise to a height unmeasured as yet, is my hope ; but to watch it in its dilatory and intermittent ascent—to count its countless failures and to number its innumerable falls—is a pastime which does not recommend itself to my intelligence, nor render itself attractive to my fancy.”

“ Yet human nature is the most interesting thing and the most important thing in the whole world—except divine nature.”

“ To me, my dear Joanna, too lively an interest in the thoughts and emotions of one’s fellow-creatures betokens a somewhat frivolous and unstable mind ; and would be in danger of gradually degenerating into a gossiping habit, not becoming nor seemly in a professor of the Christian religion.”

Joanna looked thoughtful. “ Edgar Ford says that Alice and I talk and think too much about feelings,” she said ; “ and that it is morbid and unhealthy of us.”

“ And doubtless, my dear child, there is some truth in the statement ; sufficient, at any rate, to warn you against

giving unbridled licence to a custom which, though innocuous at present, might eventually develop into a pernicious and dissipating habit of mind. Edgar Ford is a young man of excellent parts; as a son he is irreproachable, as a friend unexceptionable. And that reminds me, my love, have you ever perceived that he evinces a more tender interest than is consistent with mere friendship in our dear young friend, Alice Martin?"

Joanna's eyes opened wide with astonishment. "Good gracious, Miss Drusilla, such an idea never entered my head!"

"Well, take note when next you see the handsome young couple in each other's company, and I feel certain you will arrive at the conclusion that my suspicion is not without foundation."

"I am sure you are wrong—quite wrong! Edgar never speaks to Alice if he can help it. In fact, I don't think he likes her much. Alice is not at all clever, and Edgar thinks so much of cleverness."

"The ways of men are as a sealed book to me; and I cannot say that it is my desire ever to have the seals broken. Yet I have been led to believe that masculine minds are so constituted that mental charms do not appeal to them as powerfully as do mere physical attractions."

Joanna shook her head. "Edgar is different from other men. Paul might be taken with a pretty face, he is so impulsive and impressionable; but Edgar is too good and wise to care for any woman who would not be a companion to him in all his intellectual interests and pursuits. And though Alice is very dear and sweet and pretty, she is extremely stupid, you know."

"Yet I have heard that even good and wise men will condone the emptiness of a female head on account of the beauty of the face that appertains to it."

On her way home from Miss Dallicot's, Joanna fell in with Alice, and the two girls walked on together. After what a chairman would call "a few preliminary remarks," Joanna blurted out:

"Alice, do you think that Edgar Ford admires you? Miss Drusilla says he does."

Joanna had yet to learn that truths, like parcels, have to be neatly wrapped up before their vendors can dispose of them.

Alice stood still, so great was her astonishment. "Oh, dear no! I'm perfectly certain he doesn't. What an absurd idea for that dear old thing to get into her head! But she is so busy finding long words that her wits are apt to go wool-gathering, don't you think?"

"Yes, I do. She was delicious to-day. I did wish that you and Paul had been there too. It seemed a pity for her sweetness to be wasted on the desert air of my solitary self."

"Was she really fine?" asked Alice.

"I should just think she was. She was like a penny-a-liner and an eighteenth-century poet rolled in one."

"That really was an idiotic thing to say about Edgar; because, do you know, Joanna? he has been positively horrid to me lately."

"Has he?"

"Yes, something awful. I can't make out why, because I've never been nasty to him, that I know of."

"You never are nasty to anybody, dear."

"I never want to be," said Alice. "I am always so dreadfully anxious to be liked that I try my best to be nice to people; and when they don't like me it makes me so wretched that I want to cry."

"I never mind whether people like me or not."

"I wish I didn't," sighed Alice; "but I do, more than anything."

"Well, you are so pretty that you are sure of being liked, whatever you do. People always like pretty women," said Joanna.

"I don't think so. I'd much rather have been clever. People get tired of prettiness, but they never do of cleverness."

"Then do you think it is because you are not clever, but only pretty, that Edgar has got tired of you?" inquired the blunt Joanna, showing her inexperience of the ways of men by the use of so absurd an expression as "only pretty".

"I don't think that explains it. Of course I know that Edgar could not care much for anybody as stupid as I am, but I think it is horrid of him to positively dislike me for not being clever. It really isn't my fault. I try awfully hard to be clever, but I find it so difficult to understand things. And Edgar is generally so just to people, and so tender to their failings, that it makes it all the nastier for me."

"But are you sure he positively dislikes you? Perhaps you only bore him," suggested Joanna.

"Oh! I should not be a bit surprised if I bored him; in fact I should be surprised if I did anything else. Most people bore Edgar, you know, and yet he is always kind and courteous to them."

"And isn't he kind and courteous to you?"

Alice's pretty eyes filled with tears. "No, he isn't, and that shows how much he must hate me. He is more civil to his mother's housekeeper than he is to me; and I mind it dreadfully, because he and I used to be such friends."

"What does he do?"

"He won't speak to me if he can help it," replied Alice, fairly crying by this time; "and when he is obliged to say anything he does so in such a queer, hard voice that everybody round can see how he detests me. I often dare not speak to him when other people are there, for fear he should snub me before them and make me die of shame."

"Why don't you ask him if he is offended with you?"

"I did; and he said: 'Why should you suppose I am offended with you, Miss Martin? If my conduct has given rise to this suspicion, I must have been sadly wanting in courtesy, and I humbly apologize.' Then I felt ready to sink into the earth."

"How horrid of him!"

"He and I used to be so fond of each other when we were children. But lately he has put up palings all round himself, as if he were a tree in a park, and won't let me come near him."

"It really is queer!" agreed Joanna.

"I begin to think the real reason is that he considers us common," sobbed Alice. "Of course I know we don't belong to a good old family, like the Fords; but we are just the same as we always were; and it is unkind and snobbish of Edgar to throw over his old friends because he is ashamed of them!"

And all that time Edgar Ford was congratulating himself on behaving as a man of honour towards Paul and Alice; and he was positively wearing himself out with his superhuman efforts to hide from the latter the fact that he cared for her.

Truly the ways of a conscientious man are sometimes difficult to fathom!

CHAPTER IV.

Friends in Need.

Through whatsoever ills betide
For you I will be spent and spend :
I'll stand for ever by your side,
And naught shall you and me divide,
Because you are my friend.

PERHAPS one of the most noteworthy characteristics of "the people called Methodists" is the *esprit de corps*—the spirit of clannishness—which runs through the whole body. Is any sick, the rest are eager to pray; is any merry, the rest are delighted to sing psalms; and they will not only pray and sing in sympathy, which is comparatively easy, but they are ready to spend and to be spent for the brethren to any extent. Men may know that they are Methodists from the love they have one to another. And this love does not confine itself to the actual members of the Church, but extends to their descendants, to the third and fourth generation, even though these descendants may have forsaken the faith of their fathers, and embraced other forms of worship. This clannishness is not so much the spiritual bond of a common creed, as a more human—and so more indissoluble—bond, like the tie of country or of kinship; and therefore no variations in belief can break it.

If the children of Methodism, as they grow up and see

the various phases of modern life, incline to a broader faith or a more ornate ritual than those which satisfied their fathers, their Mother-Church does not blame them as perverts nor brand them as apostates; they are still her children and she will be interested in them to the end. Though the daughter may forget her own people and her father's house, she herself is ever remembered in the old home, where there is no bitterness on account of her forgetfulness, such forgetfulness being but the fulfilment of a law of natural growth.

It is this spirit of kinship that accounts for the wonderful freemasonry among all Wesleyan Methodists; and their masonic sign—their Shibboleth, so to speak—is their pronunciation of their denominational name. If a man pronounces the word Wesleyan as if the *s* were a *z*, and puts the accent upon the second syllable, one may safely conclude that that man has never been inside this particular fold; but if he sounds the *s* sharply as if it were double *s*, and accentuates the first syllable of the word, all Wesleyans know that he is, or his father was before him, one of themselves, for his speech bewrayeth him.

When Paul had been at Oxford for upwards of two years, and seemed on the high road to success in all his undertakings, a sudden change came o'er the spirit of his dream. The bank in which Mrs. Seaton's fortune was invested stopped payment, and the heavy calls which her husband was obliged to pay left him with but a very small addition to his income as a "supernumerary". To many men of his age this would have been a crushing blow; but Mark Seaton's mind was so uniformly set upon things above, and so indifferent to all earthly considerations, that worldly misfortunes had little power to hurt him. But the stroke, nevertheless, fell heavily

upon his wife; not that she was more worldly-minded than her husband, but because poverty always presses harder upon a woman than upon a man. Poverty meets a man face to face upon the battle-field of life, and he then and there either conquers or is conquered by it; but it waylays a woman in her home, lurking for her in the recesses of her wardrobe and jumping out upon her from her kitchen and her storeroom; and a secret foe is always worse than an open enemy.

The blow fell when Paul was down for the Long Vacation, and he saw far more clearly than his father did what it would mean to his mother and sister. With an intuition which was rare in so young a man, he realized how the daily struggle to make both ends meet—which hardly penetrated into the minister's study—would embitter Joanna's youth and render Mrs. Seaton's declining years but labour and sorrow to her; and with his accustomed decision he made up his mind that this burden must be lightened at all costs, even though the lightening taxed him to his uttermost farthing.

"Joanna," he said one day, when he and his sister were alone together, "I am not going back to Oxford."

"Not going back to Oxford, Paul? What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say. Instead of finishing my time there, I have decided to set about earning something at once, so as to make life a little less hard for you and mother."

"But there is no need for that," said Joanna. "Mother and I were saying only yesterday what a good thing it was that you had your scholarship and so were independent of us."

"That's all rot!" said Paul. "A fellow can't be independent of his own people in that sense; and I'm

not going to have mother fagged to death over things if I can stop it."

"But, Paul, it would spoil your career if you left Oxford without taking your degree."

"Don't bother about that! And besides—career or no career—my mind is made up."

"Don't you know," urged Joanna, "that father and mother and I would gladly give up everything we have for the sake of you and your future?"

"Of course I do. And do you suppose I haven't the same consideration for you?"

"But, Paul, it seems such a shame!"

"It's no use arguing with me. I've made up my mind, I tell you. Of course I'm sorry to leave Oxford and throw up my chance of a First and all that that means; but, you know, there are some things a fellow can pay too dearly for, and that is one of them."

Joanna's eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Paul! are you sure it is necessary?"

"Look here! I think it is necessary that I should set about earning some money as soon as possible."

"It is awfully good of you, dear!"

"Oh! I don't know much about the goodness of it; but I do know that a man couldn't very well act differently under the circumstances."

"But, Paul, think of your boating, and how you would miss that!"

For the first time in the conversation Paul's lip quivered. "Please don't let's talk about that! Besides, boating isn't everything."

After a few moments Joanna asked: "Then what shall you do instead of going back to Oxford?"

"I shall go and teach 'small Latin and less Greek' to Sir Richard Esdaile's son. I wrote to my tutor,

telling him how matters stood, and asking him if he could put me in the way of getting a job. And he wrote back saying that old Esdaile—who is a chum of his—wanted somebody to teach his small boy and prepare him for Eton."

"And so he recommended you?"

"He said he should be pleased to recommend me to anybody, as I took a First in Mods. and was pretty sure to do the same in Greats if I'd stayed up. So I shall go to Esdaile Court after the summer holidays are over."

"I see."

"The pay is two hundred a year," continued Paul; "and I can send most of it home, as I shall have only my clothes to pay for."

"Oh, Paul, how good you are!"

"You see, even if I stayed on at Oxford and took my degree and went to the Bar, it would be ages before I could earn anything; and I feel I mustn't waste any more time. But I shall write articles and things for magazines in the intervals of teaching young Esdaile his A,B,C, and I hope in time to make a good thing out of my pen."

"But do you think you will like teaching?" asked Joanna.

"I can't say anything about that at present. Just now my idea of teaching anybody anything is to say it over and over again in the same words, but louder and louder each time, with the addition of a few epithets hurled at the stupidity of the pupil. But I daresay I shall warm to the work in time; and as what must be must be, there is no good talking any more about it."

So Paul Seaton renounced his heart's desire, and gave up his youthful dreams. It was no light matter to

him thus to forego all the things that he had longed for from his youth up; but he was hopeful enough to believe that if a man can succeed in anything he can succeed in everything, and that success is a matter of character rather than a question of circumstance. Therefore Paul made up his mind that if he could not distinguish himself in law, he would distinguish himself in letters, and would be a great author as he might not be a great advocate; and in the meantime he worked and waited, and did all in his power to lighten the cloud which had fallen upon the little home at Chayford.

And things pressed heavily there at first, before Paul's salary had begun to come in, and before the necessary retrenchments had been put into practice: for one cannot reconstruct the management of a household in a day. But it was better for the Seatons than it might otherwise have been, because of that wonderful Methodist freemasonry.

"My husband and I want to know," said Mrs. Ford to the minister one day, "if—instead of renting another house, as you intend—you will do us the favour of living in our little cottage. We do not need it, as long as our son remains unmarried; and we should not like to let it, as Chayford Cottage has never been let. So it really will be a kindness to us if you and Mrs. Seaton will keep it warm for us till such time as we want it for Edgar and his wife."

The minister grasped her hand. "You are very good to us," he said, and his voice shook; "but I hardly like to take advantage of such generosity."

"Let me assure you that such a feeling is quite beside the mark. It is really far better for a house to be inhabited by gentlepeople than by caretakers; and yet I should not like to have any one living there with whom I

was not on terms of the most intimate friendship. So you are really conferring the favour on us."

Mr. Seaton smiled. "There was once another great woman who builded a little chamber in the wall that a prophet might abide there, and who was careful for him with all care. And we do not read that the prophet's pride rebelled against the sense of obligation, nor that he hesitated to take a favour at the great woman's hands because she happened to be rich and he was poor."

"Because when one gets to the heart of life, and understands that nothing is one's own but that all things are God's, there is no such thing as a sense of obligation; such a sense is a mere vulgar superficiality," said Mrs. Ford.

"Precisely; therefore, dear Mrs. Ford, I accept your kind offer with more gratitude than I can express. I can never repay you and your husband for what you have done for me and mine; but, like the prophet of old, I can speak for you to the King and the Captain of the Host; and, believe me, I shall do that every time I am on my knees. And may God grant more abundantly than I can desire or conceive, all the prayers that I shall offer up on your behalf!"

So it was arranged that the Seatons should take up their abode at Chayford Cottage. Thus they were saved from paying rent—a heavy item in small homes; but, nevertheless, the incidental expenses of moving and so forth were so great that Mr. Seaton decided, with much sorrow, that he should be obliged to part with his library in order to meet them. On hearing of this decision, Miss Dallicot called at the minister's.

"Is it true, dear Mr. Seaton," she began, "that you are contemplating the sale of your interesting and valuable library? Mrs. Ford informed me that she believed

such was the case, though she had no authority for making the statement beyond the sanction of rumour."

"It is true, I am grieved to say," replied the minister. "I have always made it my rule in life to pay ready money for all things, and never to run into debt even for a shilling's worth; therefore I am in need of some cash in hand to pay the expenses of our move into the cottage. My conscience would not allow me to borrow the necessary sum, so I see no alternative but to dispose of my books."

"Still you possess so many friends who would feel it a privilege to advance the sum you require, that it seems a matter of regret that you will not avail yourself of the loan."

"Do not tempt me, dear Miss Dallicot, to act against my principles. I have made a vow to owe no man anything, even for an hour; and I should not feel it consistent with my profession as a minister of Christ to run into debt on any pretext whatsoever."

"Then that being the case," said Miss Drusilla, "you will not deem it unseemly or commercial on my part to inform you that I have long viewed with feelings of envy your admirably selected collection of old books. I have come here to-day with the intention of making you a reasonable offer for the same; but I felt that such an offer would savour of impertinence if your mind were not as yet finally made up in favour of disposing of your valuable library."

Mr. Seaton looked pleased. "I am very glad to hear you say this. I confess it is a wrench to me to part with my books, and I cannot disguise from myself that I shall miss them sorely. Yet it is a great comfort to me to think that my carefully selected library will not be broken up, but will be in the possession of a cultured person capable of appreciating it."

"Then," said Miss Dallicot blushing, "may I be so mercenary as to mention the sum I should offer in exchange for your admirable collection of volumes?"

"Certainly, dear Miss Dallicot. I am, as you know, a child in these matters, and have no idea what my library is worth."

"The sum I should suggest is five hundred pounds; but if you think that insufficient, pray tell me so, and I will increase it at once."

"Nay, Miss Drusilla; that seems to me far too much. I could not take such a large sum as that for my little library."

"Believe me, dear Mr. Seaton, it is none too much," said Miss Dallicot, with more charity than veracity. "In fact I believe at a sale your books would command a far larger sum; but, as you remark, it would be a source of regret to see so carefully selected a collection ruthlessly resolved again into its integral parts."

The minister looked doubtful. "I am a poor hand at business, but I think you are too generous, dear friend."

"Quite the reverse. Take my word for it, Mr. Seaton, I am making what is vulgarly termed a bargain. To obtain a valuable library, which I have long coveted, for the comparatively trifling sum of five hundred pounds, is a stroke of good fortune such as does not generally fall to my portion."

Mark Seaton shook his head. "I trust that we are not deceiving ourselves, and letting your kindness of heart run away with us."

"Certainly not; have no doubts on that score, I entreat you. And now I have a favour to ask of you, if you will not think me importunate in so doing."

' By no means, dear Miss Drusilla. It will be the

greatest pleasure to me to do anything in my power for so faithful a friend as you have proved yourself to be."

"The request I have to make is that you will grant me permission to keep my library under your roof for a time. As you will perceive, I have no space at present for any increase in my shelf-room. I may possibly add a small octagonal room to my present study, like the one at Chayford House; but until this arrangement is carried out, I must trespass on your kindness so far as to leave the library I have purchased from you in your keeping."

The minister's face glowed with innocent pleasure. He had no suspicion of any guile on the good spinster's part, and it rejoiced his heart to know that he and his beloved books would not be parted just yet.

"I shall be only too delighted to oblige you in this matter, Miss Dallicot; in fact," added he, with the air of one imparting a new view of the question, "I myself shall profit by the arrangement; for I am sure you will not have any objection to my using the books as long as they are in my charge."

"Of course not, dear Mr. Seaton; I trust you will avail yourself of the library just the same whether it is nominally in my possession or in yours. And it will be a source of unbounded satisfaction to me to feel that my treasured books are under such safe jurisdiction."

"I hope that I have not acted in a deceitful manner," said Miss Dallicot to herself on her way home; "but the worthy man would not have accepted help more openly bestowed, I fear; wherefore my little ruse was perhaps excusable. And I was not actually guilty of any untruth—at least I trust I was not. Surely the value of anything is what it happens to be worth to us; and the minister's library is worth far more than five hundred

pounds to me, for it represents the earthly happiness of my dear friend and pastor. And it is undoubtedly true that I have no more book-room in my little home: my shelves are already so overcrowded that a new hymn-book would prove a superfluity to me at present. But I fear I overstepped the mark a little in my speech anent the octagonal enlargement; I have no actual intention of ever enlarging my borders, and I am sorely afraid I conveyed the impression that such an intention formed part of my immediate programme. I trust that I have not sinned in this, and done evil that good may come!" And the good lady sighed in much contrition of spirit, never having read how the recording angel blots out with a tear some entries even as he makes them.

But the entry against Miss Drusilla was not the only erasure that the recording angel had to make that day.

"Martha," said Mrs. Seaton to her faithful hand-maiden, "it goes to my heart to say it, but I fear we cannot keep you with us any longer."

"Well to be sure, ma'am!" exclaimed Martha, in unfeigned surprise. "And what may have put such a notion as that into your head? You'll be talking about giving the minister notice next."

"The fact is, Martha, that we can no longer afford so valuable a maid as yourself. Now that our circumstances are changed, we can only keep one servant for the very rough work, and Miss Joanna and I must do the rest ourselves."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that it is the money-question that has put you thus beside yourself, ma'am, and not any dissatisfaction with me. Not that I should have left, even if such had been the case; I should have stayed with you for your own good, even though you had given me notice twenty times a day. Bless you, ma'am, if I

wasn't here to look after you all, the whole place would go to rack and ruin."

"You are right, Martha. Home would not be home without you!"

"Then don't multiply words any more, ma'am, or talk nonsense about my going away. I have made up my mind to stay on with you all, and not to take any wages whatsoever: and when Martha Prosser puts her foot down, all the king's horses and all the king's men can't pick it up again."

"But, dear Martha, we can't let you go on serving us without wages."

"And why not, I should like to know? What do I want with wages? My face is too plain for me to care to spend money on my back—which is no secret, being there for all the world to see. And I don't hold with saving, ma'am. Money is like the manna, to my thinking; it is all very well to supply the needs of the passing day, but when you begin to save it up it doesn't improve with keeping."

"Yet we should all of us lay by what we can for our old age," suggested Mrs. Seaton.

"I don't hold with that, neither. It is a poor compliment, to my mind, to say, 'The Lord will provide'; and then to bolster Him up with a bank-book, as if He couldn't do His part of the business without our assistance. My conscience alive! If we'll only do our part properly, He'll do His, never fear!"

The minister's wife did not reply in words; but she threw her arms round Martha's neck, and sobbed out her griefs and her gratitude on that faithful breast.

As for Martha, when she had soothed and comforted her mistress, she armed herself with the wisdom of the serpent, and knocked at the door of the minister's study.

"If you please, sir," she said in a sepulchral tone, "I want to consult you about a spiritual difficulty."

"Certainly, Martha, certainly," replied Mr. Seaton with much warmth, feeling far more at home on eternal than on temporal ground. "Sit down and tell me all about it, and I will see how I can help you."

Thus adjured, Martha took a seat. "I used to think," she began, "that when one had got to a sensible age, one would have outgrown the snares and wiles of the devil; but, bless my soul! he has got them suited to fit all ages and sizes, as they say of ready-made clothes."

"He has indeed, my poor Martha; and it is when we think he has no longer the power to harm us that he is most to be dreaded. But tell me, what is the temptation that has been assailing you now?"

Martha's face was the picture of gloom as she replied: "I feel that covetousness and the love of money are creeping upon me in my old age; and we all know that the Lord hateth the covetous man, and that the love of money is the root of all evil".

Mr. Seaton's face was very tender as he answered: "I fancy that you are unduly distressing yourself. Surely I, who know you so well and with whom you have met in class all these years, should have perceived this fault in your character had it ever existed. Believe me, your conscience is over-sensitive, and now falsely accuses you."

But Martha shook her head. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," she replied; "and I want you to help me to conquer the devil, and not explain him away. As my Aunt Matilda Jane said, when the doctor told her she had nasal catarrh: 'It is a common cold in the head, and I haven't sent for you to christen it but to cure it'. That is what Aunt Matilda Jane said, and she had right on her side, to my thinking."

"Well, Martha, if, as you say, the sin of covetousness is lying in wait for your soul, I can only pray for you, and entreat you to watch as well as pray that you enter not into this temptation."

"That is not enough. There is more than prayer wanted in my case. Not that prayer is not sufficient for some, and I should be the last to say a word against it; but I want something more myself," replied the penitent.

"Then tell me what that more is," demanded Martha's spiritual adviser, in some perplexity.

"I want you to remove the temptation far from me, so that I can no longer behold the accursed thing. In fact I want you to take all my savings, and spend them, and never let me hear of them again, they being but filthy lucre at best, and amounting to one hundred and eleven pounds, fifteen shillings and sixpence in all," added the excited Martha, thrusting her bank-book into her master's hand. "If I keep them, they may draw my soul into perdition, and make me as them that have their portion in this life; while if you'll only take and spend them, you'll save my soul alive, and be able to have a fire in your bedroom all the winter, which the mistress ought never to be without, her being so rheumatic, bless her dear heart!"

Then at last the minister understood; and he also understood that when any pilgrim's face is set as though to go to Jerusalem, it is no sign of true apostleship to try to turn that pilgrim back. So he took Martha's bank-book into his keeping, until such time as he saw fit to return it to her.

"Thank you, Martha," he said, and his eyes were full of tears. "I will do as you bid me, and shall be able to see that your dear mistress lacks nothing during the coming winter, owing to your generosity. And you

in your turn will always remember that in this household, as in the early Church, we have all things in common; and that whatever is ours is also yours."

"Then that's settled," replied Martha cheerfully; "and now I must go back to the kitchen to see the oven, which is apt to burn the pie-crust without baking it, unless duly warned and admonished by them that have authority. You'd wonder how an oven could burn without baking; but human nature is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and our kitchen oven is one of the worst."

"Yet, Martha, God is very good, and therefore human nature is sometimes very good likewise; I have certainly proved it of late."

"Well, you see, sir, it is in this way," expounded Martha. "God made man in His own image; and though man spoils himself in the making, and loses his proper pattern, and falls out of shape, the original mould is not broken yet—nor never will be, trust the Lord for that!"

CHAPTER V.

Water-lilies.

I will crown you as my queen
By my soul's subjection,
For you all your life have been
What I think perfection.

PAUL felt leaving Oxford more than he would have cared to confess; and the weeks he spent at home would have been a dreary time had they not been brightened by the smiles and the sympathy of Alice Martin.

To Paul's vigorous and energetic nature, Alice was very soothing and restful. It was true that she did not understand more than half of what he said to her, but she listened to it all, which was nearly as good; and "a girl could not be expected to enter into a man's thoughts and feelings," Paul said to himself, not having yet graduated in Cupid's University. And Paul came very near to loving Alice in those days, with the sort of comfortable, common-place, every-day love which satisfies ninety-nine men and one woman out of every hundred. But Paul, unfortunately, happened to be the one, and Alice one of the ninety-nine; so there was not much chance of their making one another happy.

One day in the summer in which Paul left Oxford, he and Joanna, with Edgar Ford and Alice Martin, went for
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a picnic to Chayford Wood. Edgar had ceased to make himself disagreeable to Alice, no man being able to perform the impossible for too long a time at a stretch ; and Alice sunned herself in his reawakened smiles, not even her love for Paul having the power to stamp out her desire for universal popularity.

As they were sitting by the lake Alice remarked: "Isn't it funny how a lovely scene like this makes one feel good and happy, and yet sad with longing for something that one has never heard of?"

"I am never sad with longing for what I never heard of," replied Joanna. "Whenever I feel sad, I always know it means that I want to see Mrs. Crozier again."

"Are you still very devoted to Mrs. Crozier?" inquired Alice.

"Of course I am. I'd do anything in the world for her."

"Anything wrong or foolish do you mean?" asked Edgar.

"Certainly not. She'd never want me to do anything wrong or foolish."

"That is not the question," said Edgar, who greatly loved to tease Joanna. "Would you if she did?"

"But she wouldn't. Would you do anything wrong or foolish for any one you cared much for?" inquired Joanna, turning the tables on her adversary.

Edgar thought for a moment. "Anything wrong, no; anything foolish, yes," he answered.

"I was reading a poem the other day," said Alice, "about a lady who threw her glove into the lions' den to test her lover's affection; he jumped into the den and rescued the glove, only to fling it into the lady's face. I cannot make up my mind whether he was right or not."

"Most certainly he was," replied Paul, in his highly

superior manner. "To make an exhibition of so sacred a thing as a man's love proved the woman to be vain and frivolous, and incapable of seeing the deeper thing. Therefore the man was better without her than with her, and he did well to throw her over. There is nothing so revolting to a man as frivolity in a woman. When deep calleth unto deep, love reaches perfection; when shallow calleth unto shallow, there is not much harm done; but when deep calleth unto shallow, the tragedies of life begin."

"I am not sure that the lady was so frivolous," said Edgar thoughtfully. "Probably she was sick to death of the adulation of empty-headed and empty-hearted courtiers, and wanted to prove to herself and to the assembled court that this particular knight really cared for her. In which case the deep called unto shallow indeed; but the lady was the deep and the knight the shallow."

"I do not agree with you at all," answered Paul rather hotly; "she was vain and frivolous, and wanted to make the other women jealous by showing off the devotion of her young man. And I'd see a woman at Jericho before I'd make an exhibition of my love for her to excite the envy of her rivals."

"Gently, my young friend," said Edgar with his pleasant smile. "If you really loved a woman you'd give her your heart out and out; and whether she cherished it or played with it would be her concern, not yours."

"But no nice woman would want to play with it," remarked Joanna.

"I don't see that," replied Edgar. "Even nice women have their little vanities, and like to prove the extent of their power over men. Besides, if one really loved a woman, one would go on loving her just the same, even if she did the things that one did not con-

sider nice ; of course one would hate the things, but that would make no difference in loving the woman."

"Oh! yes, it would," cried Paul. "I should leave off loving a woman at once if she did things that I did not approve of. I don't say that it would not hurt at the time; but the wrench of thrusting her out of my life then and there would not hurt half so much in the long run as letting her go on withering up my affections and knocking down my ideals. In the former case I should lose her and keep myself; in the latter I should lose both myself and her."

"But, my dear fellow, you wouldn't bother about yourself; you'd only know that you could not afford to lose the woman; so you would rescue her glove from the lions and then button it for her."

"Not I! I should teach her a lesson and then have done with her."

Edgar laughed. "My good Paul, who wants to teach women lessons? You talk as if they were schoolboys, and you really are old enough to know better."

"But do you mean to say, Edgar," asked Joanna, "that you would let any woman make a plaything or a door-mat of you?"

"By all means, if I loved her and she was so minded. If I really cared for her, you see, I should think it the greatest honour to be elevated to the uses of her playthings and her door-mats, and I should count myself unworthy to be adapted to such purposes."

"I call that unmanly," remarked Paul. "Even if a man does love a woman, he owes a duty to himself as well as to her."

Edgar merely chuckled.

"I see nothing to laugh at," quoth Paul severely. "I did not say anything humorous."

"Not intentionally," murmured Edgar.

"It seems to me," continued Paul, "that a man is unfair to himself and to the woman when he grovels at her feet. A sensible and equal affection is better for both of them."

"O noble judge! O excellent young man!" exclaimed Edgar.

"What I am saying is common sense," added Paul, "though you appear to think me harsh and unloving."

"Not harsh and unloving, my dear Paul; merely foolish and ignorant," replied Edgar.

"I cannot see the sense of throwing a glove among lions just for the sake of picking it up again," said the sensible Joanna. "It seems to me a most unnecessary and absurd action."

"It would be nice to feel that a man liked you well enough to perform unnecessary and absurd actions for your sake," added Alice wistfully.

Edgar looked at her, but he said nothing; he only understood.

"It would not please me if men did absurd things for my sake," persisted Joanna. "It would only please me if they did good and noble things to win my regard."

"Joanna is quite right," agreed Joanna's brother approvingly. "Vain women do men a lot of harm."

"Even if they like them?" suggested Alice.

"Of course; the more the men like them, the more harm they do. But the worst of women is," continued Paul, "that they are always wanting to see what will happen if they do certain things. They make a man angry just to see what he looks like when he is angry; and they make a man miserable just to see what he looks like when he is miserable; and they never realize how much gratuitous suffering all this entails upon the man."

"But they haven't the slightest idea how much it hurts," said Edgar. "They know that it is all a sort of histrionic performance or scientific experiment, and they expect the man to treat the matter from the same intellectual standpoint. While as for him, poor beggar! he only knows that he is being broken on the wheel, and he cannot for the life of him see the object of it, as you say."

Now Alice was a good girl as well as a pretty girl, and amiable and unselfish into the bargain; but she was not the reigning beauty of Chayford for nothing, and she now and again wanted—like other queens—to try on her regalia. So she said, in her sweet plaintive voice, "I should so like some of those water-lilies from the far side of the pool".

The said lilies grew under a steep and slippery bank which was the only approach to them, there being no boat on Chayford Pool at this particular time. Both men looked across the pool, and Paul shook his head.

"I'm afraid you can't have them," he said, "till there is a boat on the water. The bank is not really safe after the heavy rains we have had lately."

Alice pouted. "But I want them now; they will be all over by the time the boats are in use."

Edgar looked at her. "Do you really care very much about them?" he asked.

"Of course I do," replied Alice. "They are my favourite flowers, and I want some dreadfully."

"Then you shall have some," said Edgar quietly, walking off in the direction of the lilies, round the end of the pool.

Paul's brow grew very black. "Don't be a fool, Edgar!" he cried roughly. "That bank really is not safe; and a girl's whim is not worth the price of a wetting, especially to a delicate fellow like you. Alice,

what are you thinking of? Tell him at once he is not to go."

But Alice's usually equable temper was so ruffled by Paul's brusqueness, and she would not do as he bade her.

"Alice, don't you hear what I am saying? Tell him that he is not to go," repeated Paul.

But Alice's gentle spirit was so sore from the effect of Paul's indifference to her, that she shut her pretty mouth obstinately and would not interfere.

"If Paul is so horrid to me he shall see that other men admire me," she said to herself; "and that will add to my importance in his eyes."

Finding that Alice was obdurate, Paul ran after Edgar to endeavour to dissuade him from so foolhardy an attempt; but before he reached him, Edgar was half-way down the slippery bank.

By keeping "one foot on sea and one on shore," and by grasping the overhanging bough of a birch tree, Edgar managed to gather a handful of the desired lilies; but when he tried to return, his shore foot slipped, and he fell into the water. By that time Paul had overtaken his friend, and was able to help Edgar out of the pool and up the bank; but not before the latter had suffered a thorough soaking, which brought on a severe chill.

Edgar was laid up for several days in consequence of his immersion in Chayford Pool, during which time Paul visited him constantly, and Alice as constantly sent him flowers and books and little scented notes; for her tender heart was wrung with remorse for the consequences of her vanity. Edgar quite understood this remorse and accepted it, for he knew Alice better than Paul did; but remorse was not the particular thing he was wanting from her just then.

"I say, old fellow," said Paul to him one day, "I shall never like Alice again, after the scurvy trick she played you."

"Oh! don't say that," besought Edgar, bravely fighting Alice's battle with Paul, though it was no easy task to him to do so. "It was only a little bit of feminine vanity on her part, which ninety-nine pretty girls out of every hundred would have indulged in."

"Then deliver me from ninety-nine pretty girls out of every hundred!" prayed Paul.

"It really isn't fair to blame her, old boy! She had no idea there was any risk in the thing, and she has been far more sorry for me and more kind to me than I deserve ever since."

"Oh! I don't mean to say that she deliberately planned to make you ill, nor do I deny that her penitence is sincere; all I say is that the shallow vanity which induces a woman to expose a man to danger, or even to discomfort, to gratify a mere whim of hers, is a thing which is simply revolting to me. It is not that I cannot forgive her: I could forgive far worse things than this, if they had their origin in something deeper—even if more dangerous—than mere vanity. I am not at war with her; but I know and feel that I shall never like her again."

Edgar puffed at his pipe in silence for some moments. "I used to think you cared for Alice," he said at last.

"I used to think so too, at one time," answered Paul slowly; "but I know now I was mistaken. I liked her beauty and her pretty sympathetic manner, and I found her very soothing when I was irritable and out of temper. But there was always something which disappointed me in her. She is charming and pleasant, like a walled flower garden; but there is no 'beyond' in Alice. The

woman I love must not only have a garden in the front of her character to gladden my eyes every day, but there must also be glimpses of a view beyond, of sunny lands of Beulah and of mountains reaching up to heaven."

Edgar smoked in silence.

"There are three things which combine to produce love," continued Paul, in his youthfully didactic way; "moral excellence, intellectual companionship and physical charm. Of course if one can get the three in a line, one is right for all time; but generally one has to put up with only two. I respected Alice's character and I felt her charm; but intellectually she and I were never comrades; nevertheless I fancied that two conditions out of the three might prove enough. After her conduct the other day, however, I saw that, though sweet and amiable, there was something small and paltry in her nature. Therefore she has now ceased to appeal to the second side of me; and personal beauty alone is not sufficient to satisfy me in a wife. So out of my future life Alice goes."

"Then do you mean to say that, as far as you are concerned, another man has the right to try and win Alice?"

Paul looked up in surprise. "Of course! Why not? You don't mean to say that you care for her?"

"But I do," answered Edgar with his quiet smile; "I have cared for her all her life, and I shall continue to do so all mine. But I stood on one side because I thought you loved her." He was too chivalrous to say, "because I thought she loved you".

"Well, go in and win, old man!" cried Paul, grasping his friend's hand. "But don't you think that her action the other day was rather small and petty?"

"I think I would rather not discuss Alice even with

you, my dear fellow. You see, I should knock down any man who dared to say a word against her, and I should be sorry if that man happened to be yourself."

"All right; I beg your pardon. All that I can say is that I think Alice is the luckiest girl I know."

"I'm afraid she won't think so."

"Why? don't you think she cares for you?" inquired the unperceiving Paul.

"I am sure she doesn't, worse luck for me!"

"Well then, she will soon learn to do so, there is no doubt of that, now that she has seen how much you care for her."

Edgar smiled rather sadly. "I have succeeded in teaching her that there is no one in the world but her; but I have not yet taught her that there is no one in the world but me,"

"She will soon learn it, never fear! with such a schoolmaster."

But poor Edgar did not feel quite so sure.

And Alice all the time was telling herself that since Edgar loved her so much, Paul was certain to love her too; an illogical argument, perhaps, but one most convincing to the normal female mind. She did not know, poor child! that with her own hands she had shut the door of the Eden which she coveted; and that the hands which have power to shut have not necessarily the power to open again.

Alas for us all that the gate of Eden is so hard to seek, and that so few succeed in finding it! And those of us who are fortunate enough to discover it, must take heed to our ways lest it close with a spring, and open to us never again, knock we never so loudly.

CHAPTER VI.

Esdaile Court.

Their ways were ways of pleasant grace,
They toiled not neither did they spin;
But since their smiles made glad the place,
Dare men of sterner cast of face
Account such carelessness a sin?

IT was on a sunny September afternoon that Paul Seaton first saw Esdaile Court; and the mellowed Elizabethan house, with its stately avenues and large lake, was very pleasant to look upon in the autumn sunlight. On his arrival he was ushered by a stout and pompous butler into the drawing-room, where Lady Esdaile was taking tea with her son and daughter, aged respectively nine and fourteen. Lady Esdaile had been a great beauty in her day, and at eight-and-thirty was still a lovely woman.

"How do you do, Mr. Beaton?" she began. "How nice of you to come just in time for tea! Violet and Dick are having tea with me to-day for a treat, but they generally have it in the schoolroom, don't you know? Come, children, this is Mr. Beaton who is so kind as to come and teach Dick."

Violet, who inherited her mother's beauty, treated the new tutor to a supercilious little nod; but Dick, a plain and wholesome little boy, thrust a sticky and jam-besprinkled palm into Paul's outstretched hand.

"I say," said Dick, "I've been out shooting with father to-day."

"Have you?" replied Paul with polite interest. "I hope you have had good sport."

Dick shook his little red head. "We had bad luck," he said, "shocking bad luck; only four brace and a couple of hares all day. But father let me carry the birds home, and I got my clothes covered with blood," he added more cheerfully.

"As Dick has been out all day, and walked so far, I am letting him have an egg with his tea," said Lady Esdaile, "and he insists upon eating bread and jam with it. I wish he wouldn't! Do you think it will make him ill?"

"I cannot say. It is not a combination that would suit me, but other times other manners, you know, Lady Esdaile."

"What a fuss you make about a chap, mother!" exclaimed Dick with scorn. "I'm all right and feel as fit as a fiddle. But it is enough to make a fellow sick to hear you talking so much about whether things are good for us or not."

"Very well, darling. But promise me you will leave off eating jam with your egg the minute you begin to feel not quite well. And, oh! Mr. Sebright, I was forgetting all about you, and you have had such a long journey and must want your tea dreadfully! How stupid I am!"

"Not at all. The journey from Chayford is quite a short one really, only there are so many changes it makes it rather troublesome."

"I know. I hate changes, don't you? just when you've got your things all about the carriage and are settling yourself down to a nice book, a horrid guard or porter or something comes shouting at you, and makes

you jump out of your carriage and leave half your things behind. And my maid never will help at stations, because she hates travelling and is offended with me every time I take her from home. She says the train makes her giddy or something. And you see I can't go without her, because I couldn't do my own hair to save my life."

"I suppose not," said Paul, feeling very much amused by her ladyship's flow of conversation.

"And there, I have gone and forgotten your tea again! How careless I am! I am afraid this tea is not very fresh, Mr. Sebright; in fact it has stood for over an hour; but Simmons (that is the butler) is so dreadfully offended if I send out for fresh tea to be made during the afternoon, that I really dare not do it. You won't mind much, will you, if it is rather strong and cold?"

Paul smiled, and forsook the paths of rectitude so far as to assure her ladyship that tea on the lees was the beverage he fancied above all others.

"Oh, how dear of you to say that! And you can have as much hot water as you like, though the hot water is cold too. But it will take off the bitter taste which makes the special nastiness of old tea. Is it very bad, now you come to drink it?" asked Lady Esdaile with sympathetic interest.

Paul lied bravely. "It is delicious."

"I am so glad. It really is tiresome having a butler who takes offence if you ask him to do anything!"

"It must make life very difficult, Lady Esdaile."

"It does; very difficult indeed. I often don't get enough to eat, because I daren't ask for more when Simmons is carving; but I make up with vegetables, because the footmen hand them, and I'm not afraid of

a footman. Still, vegetables without meat are very fattening, don't you think? and the dread of my life is to get fat. I don't think that any woman looks well when she is fat, do you?"

"I really don't know," answered Paul, who had hitherto lived among women who cared for none of these things. "I am afraid I never thought about it."

"How quaint of you! But you are awfully clever, you see, and so never think about anything but books and sums and things. Now I'm not a bit clever or learned or anything."

Paul again wandered from the path of the upright by expressing polite surprise at this platitude.

"Have another cup of tea—do," begged Lady Esdaile. "If you don't, I shall know you told a story about its not tasting as bad as we expected."

And Paul was so charmed by her ladyship's beauty and good-nature, that he asked for another cup, and swallowed the same without wincing. Nevertheless he possessed the spirit of a philanthropist, so he remarked: "There is a sort of arrangement, I've seen somewhere, of putting the tea-leaves into a little bag and pouring the hot water over them. Then the leaves are removed; so that however long the tea stands, it never gets any stronger."

"What a lovely idea! and it would be such fun taking the tea-leaves out again while they were all wet."

"It would make a jolly mess, I bet!" agreed Dick enthusiastically. "You'd always let me do it, wouldn't you, mother?"

"Of course, darling, if you would promise to take care not to burn your fingers."

"I'd make a fine splash all over the cloth!" chuckled Dick.

"What a dirty boy you are!" said Violet reprovingly.

Dick did not reply to his sister in words; but he turned upon her such a wilfully contorted countenance that Violet dissolved into laughter.

"But I'm afraid Simmons wouldn't approve of that arrangement," sighed Lady Esdaile. "He always sets his face against anything fresh. I remember once Sir Richard bought a new kind of carving-knife—a *patent masticator*, I think it was called, or some such disgusting name—and Simmons said he would give notice rather than demean himself by using it. He had carved for the family for thirty years, he said, and his own right hand had been enough all that time, and would be till the end; it wasn't true, because he had always used a carving-knife of some sort; but Simmons is quite poetical when he is excited."

"What did Sir Richard do?" asked Paul.

"Oh! he roared with laughter and threw the thing behind the fire. To tell the truth, I believe Richard is as much afraid of Simmons as I am; but he'd rather die than own it."

Paul very soon settled down in his new quarters at Esdaile Court. He liked the place and the people. The latter were so different from everything that he had been accustomed to, that they completely fascinated him. Their wheels were all well oiled; and so they took life easily, and never seemed to look below the surface of things. And yet they did their duty in the state of life to which they were called; and they were high-minded and upright and well-bred, and were careful to act honourably and charitably towards their neighbours, and to go to the parish church regularly once every Sunday. They never talked about their hearts or their

souls or their consciences ; but ate and drank and were merry, and made the corner of the earth where their lot was cast a better place for their being in it.

Sir Richard Esdaile was a typical fox-hunting English squire, a good many years older than his beautiful wife, of whom he was intensely proud. He and Paul got on very well together, though they had nothing in common, save their mutual respect and admiration. As for little Dick, he at once began to adore Paul, and appointed his tutor his final court of appeal in all things ; and Paul grew very fond of Dick, and was a better man for it.

"I suppose Dick will go into the army when he grows up," said Paul to Lady Esdaile one day.

"I suppose so, if he can get through those silly, tiresome examinations. And if he does, I do hope he'll go into a regiment where there is a pretty uniform ; a blue one would be best for him with his red hair. I don't like scarlet with red hair, do you, Mr. Seaton?" Lady Esdaile had mastered Paul's name by this time.

Paul laughed. "I don't think it matters to a man what colour his clothes are."

"Don't you?"

"No ; do you?"

"Oh! yes, dreadfully. I always adore to see men in dark blue. Think how nice a blue serge morning-suit looks on a man, and how sweet sailors always are! Of course a pink coat looks jolly for hunting, but I don't like red uniforms half as well as blue ones—especially for fair hair."

Lady Esdaile's way of looking at life was a source of never-ending amusement to Paul ; she always seemed to be gazing at the world through the wrong end of a telescope. And Paul was not as severe on frivolity as he

had been in the days when he so ruthlessly passed sentence on Alice; he was becoming more a man of the world, and consequently more sympathetic with, and tender towards, human nature. For life teaches a man more than all the Universities rolled in one.

"I've just had such a fright," Lady Esdaile confided to her son's tutor, when the latter had been about a year at Esdaile.

"What is the matter? Can I assist in any way?" asked Paul, who was the help of the family in all difficulties, from the writing of French *ménus* to the letting of cats out of traps.

"I was afraid Isabel Carnaby was coming to live with us."

"But who is Isabel Carnaby? I fear I cannot gauge the extent of your anxiety till I know who the lady is."

"Oh! I thought everybody knew Isabel. She is my husband's niece. He had two sisters, Lady Farley and Mrs. Carnaby. Isabel was the Carnabys' only child, and Mrs. Carnaby died when she was born. It was a pity Mrs. Carnaby died, she had such lovely blue eyes and such a knack of knowing what suited her. She was the best-dressed woman I ever met, and Major Carnaby was devoted to her."

"Is Major Carnaby dead?" asked Paul.

"Yes; he died out in India while Isabel was still a child, and she has lived with the Farleys ever since. She is fairly well off; and her father left word in his will that when she was of age she must decide whether to live with the Farleys or with us, as both Sir Benjamin and my husband were ready to take her for her mother's sake. She has just come of age, and I was dreadfully afraid she would decide to come to us."

"And you wouldn't have liked it?"

"No. I hate girls of that age; they always say you are getting stout, and that your hair isn't all your own."

Paul concealed a smile. "Did she give the apple to Sir Benjamin?" he inquired.

"Yes; to my great relief. Sir Benjamin has got a governorship out in India, so Isabel has chosen to go on living with them. She is just the sort of girl to like being with 'Excellencies,' and all that sort of thing."

"What is Miss Carnaby like? Is she pretty?"

"Oh! no; not pretty, but smart and stylish, and knows how to put her clothes on. And she is dreadfully clever. She positively terrified me the last time she was over in England."

"What sort of cleverness? Does she write books?" asked Paul, who was always interested in literary ventures.

"Good gracious, no; not so bad as that!" replied Lady Esdaile, looking shocked. "But she reads a good deal, and says sharp things, and you never know whether she is laughing at you or not. She makes me quite nervous."

"I don't like that sort of sharpness—especially in a woman."

"No more do I. And then Isabel is so abominably vain. And I don't see anything to be conceited about in mere cleverness; do you? It isn't as if she were pretty."

"Still even clever people are sometimes conceited, Lady Esdaile."

"Oh! of course cleverness in a man is awfully nice, and quite a thing to be conceited about," owned her ladyship graciously. "I can't tell you how much my husband and I admire your cleverness, nor how thankful we are for Dick to have the advantage of it. But I don't think it is quite the thing for a girl; do you? Prettiness is so much more important."

"I suppose beauty is the best gift for a woman to possess," said Paul; "but there are clever women and clever women; and Miss Carnaby seems—from your description—to be exactly the sort of clever woman that I specially detest."

Lady Esdaile shook her head. "Men don't generally detest her," she confessed; "she is a man's woman out and out. And she is a woman's woman too," she added; "she really can make herself awfully pleasant if she likes, and she has a wonderful knack of getting on with anybody. She is simply splendid if you have got a lot of dull people in hand; there is nobody she cannot talk to. I believe if she met the man in the moon she would find out that he and she had a lot of mutual acquaintances, even if they weren't related to one another."

"Then she has her good points?"

"Yes. It seems to me that the great question everybody is asking everybody else is: 'Do you know the So-and-Sos?' If you do know them, the conversation flourishes; and if you don't, it drops. The So-and-Sos are really far more important as a conversational opening than the weather. I always think it rather *bourgeois* to talk about the weather; don't you?"

"It certainly is a hackneyed subject," owned Paul.

"Well, Isabel invariably does know the So-and-Sos; and therefore, socially, she is a success. Take her to the dreariest tea-party, and in five minutes there is a buzz of conversation."

"Then she is popular, I presume, and therefore spoiled. I don't generally like what are termed popular people, I am afraid."

"To a certain extent she is popular," said Lady Esdaile grudgingly. "That is to say, she has always crowds of men fluttering round her. Sir Richard expects

that she will make a brilliant marriage out in India ; but I'm not so sure. The clever women may get the most partners, but it is the handsome ones that make the best matches."

"Well, anyway, I am very glad she is not coming here. '

"Oh! I daresay you'd have got on with her all right. You and she could have talked about books and things, don't you know?"

Paul smiled. "But there are other things to be talked about besides books, Lady Esdaile."

"Yes ; but some people find books awfully interesting. I should myself if they didn't always send me to sleep before I had properly got into them."

And Paul smiled again.

So Isabel Carnaby did not come to Esdaile Court just then, and Paul went on with his teaching of Dick ; and made wonderful progress, considering the raw material out of which he was expected to manufacture a scholar. He also tried his hand at literature, and earned an additional hundred a year by his contributions to magazines ; whereby life at the cottage at Chayford was made considerably easier than it would otherwise have been.

At Chayford things went on much the same as usual. Edgar continued to woo Alice in silence, and consequently in vain ; but he comforted himself by the idea that, as she grew older and found how false and fickle the world is, she would learn the value of one faithful heart that would never fail her, however unworthy she might prove herself to be. As for her, her mind was still full of thoughts of Paul. He was not on the spot, it is true, as Edgar was, but he came home every holidays ; and it takes an exceptionally clever woman to forget a man in three months—even when she has another man to help her.

CHAPTER VII.

Isabel Carnaby.

The little blind god, as he softly trod,
Did a dart for his bow prepare;
And he sharpened it with a woman's wit,
And he feathered it with her hair.

WHEN Paul had been four years at Esdaile Court, and Dick was considered nearly ready for Eton, the Farleys' term of Indian governorship came to an end, and they returned to England bringing their niece with them. As Lady Esdaile had predicted, Isabel had failed to make a brilliant marriage out in India; but whether that were her fault or her misfortune, Isabel alone (with the exception of two or three young officers who were still too sore to refer to the subject) could say.

To Paul's horror, the Anglo-Indian trio came to stay at Esdaile, and he was appointed to take Miss Carnaby in to dinner on the night of her arrival. He disliked all he had heard of the girl, and he made up his mind to snub her as much as was compatible with good manners, and not to allow her to fall into the error of imagining for one moment that he would ever be dragged captive at her chariot-wheels.

The Farley party had arrived only just in time to dress; and the drawing-room was already half full of

county magnates and their attendant wives, when Sir Benjamin and his two ladies came in.

Sir Benjamin was short and stout, and her ladyship was tall and thin; she evidently possessed the remains of striking beauty, which he—as evidently—did not. Isabel followed them with an air of perfect assurance that somehow irritated Paul; she really was not good-looking enough to give herself such airs, he thought; for he was as yet too unlearned to know that her gown was fresh from Paris, and was the very acme of the prevailing fashion.

"Let me present you to Miss Carnaby," said Lady Esdaile's voice. "Isabel, this is Mr. Seaton, who will take you in to dinner."

Paul prepared himself to meet a fellow-Greek, and to return Miss Carnaby's bow as superciliously as she made it; but he was completely taken aback when she held out a friendly little ungloved hand, saying: "I'm so awfully pleased to meet you, Mr. Seaton! Dick tells me that you can blow birds' eggs better than any man he knows; and a past-master in any art is always interesting to me."

"It is very kind of you to say so, Miss Carnaby." Paul was still a little stiff. He certainly had some excuse for feeling annoyed; he had armed himself to rebuff airs and graces, and here was the most natural girl he had ever met in his life. He felt that even Joanna and Alice would seem affected beside her, she was so perfectly at her ease.

"I'm so glad you are taking me in to dinner," she continued, as the whole party trooped dining-room-wards; "all the other men in the room are so old. And I'm dreadfully tired of going in to dinner with my extreme seniors. Would you believe it? One week—since

we came home—the united ages of the men who took me in to dinner amounted to three hundred. I looked in *Debrett*, and added them up."

Paul thawed sufficiently to smile. "That was rather rough on you!"

"It was simply unbearable. They would explain things to me, and try to instruct me. And they ran to anecdotes and statistics at the slightest provocation. One told me of all the reductions in rent he'd made to his tenants during the last twenty years; and another gave me such an exhaustive description of every attack of gout he'd ever suffered, that I could write a biography of that man's big toe."

"Nevertheless I hope you showed a teachable spirit in listening to them."

"Oh! yes. I didn't really listen, but I kept counting a hundred and then saying, 'How very interesting'. And then counting another hundred, and saying it again. You can't think what a good idea it was. It was like my aunt's plan of counting imaginary geese to send yourself to sleep; which, by the way, always keeps me awake the whole night."

"I know. My mother favours that plan too, but she always call them sheep. She makes them go through a gate, she says; I tried it once, but my gate kept swinging-to and squeezing the sheep, till I was quite wild with anxiety and consequently more wakeful than ever."

Isabel laughed. "But I punished my last old gentleman," she said.

"What did you do?"

"When I found that my partner for Saturday's dinner was older than any of his predecessors, my usually amiable spirit rebelled."

"And what form did the rebellion take?"

"I discovered that by breathing hard, when my old gentleman wasn't looking, I could make the candle-shade in front of us catch fire whenever I liked. So when there came any course that he was particularly keen on, I blew with my mouth, and the shade blazed. My poor partner had to save the women and children by extinguishing the fire; and while he was engaged in this act of heroism, the footman—thinking he had finished—removed his plate, and he saw its dainties no more."

Paul laughed outright.

"Have you ever noticed," asked Isabel, as the plates were being changed, "that the bit of toast underneath a *hors d'œuvre*—which, mark you, is appointed to be cut by a little silver fork—is always of a consistency which would defy a steam-hammer?"

"Is it?"

"Invariably; and therefore the little silver fork is usually bent or broken, while the piece of toast springs unscratched into the air and lands upon the carpet."

"You speak feelingly," said Paul.

"I have learnt in suffering what I teach in ordinary conversation. The fish-fork is also a source of much distress to me."

"How is that? It never strikes me as an instrument of destruction."

"Well, you see, it is in this way," explained Miss Carnaby. "Some people have fish-forks as well as fish-knives—sort of half-bred dessert-forks, don't you know? with ivory handles. Now, we don't have these at home—we use ordinary silver forks, so I am not prepared for them."

"I see; they take you unawares."

"Precisely. The consequence is I use a common fork for my fish; and then, when I get to the second *entrée*,

my sin finds me out, and I am left with nothing on my hands but a large knife and this nasty little half-caste dessert-fork."

"Whatever do you do?" asked the amused Paul.

"I fling myself upon the mercy of the man who has taken me in; and I confess I have never found my confidence misplaced. He invariably gives me his own silver fork, and, if he is a brave man, asks one of the footmen for another for himself; but if he is only of a normal courage, he eats his own *entrée* with my fish-fork, in shame and confusion of face."

"You might write a book on the Sorrows of Dining," suggested Paul.

"So I could; at least you and I could do it together."

Paul could not help feeling flattered, though he tried his hardest not. "I should describe what I have suffered at the hands of an undermined jelly," he said. "Don't you know the horrid, insinuating way the thing has of curtsying to you; and—when you respond to its inviting attitude—of flinging itself bodily upon your neck, and burying yourself and it in the common ruins?"

Isabel laughed with delight. "I know exactly. And another evil and bitter thing is helping oneself to strawberries."

"When they are in a pyramid, you mean?" said Paul.

"Yes; and the strawberry at the apex of the pyramid suffers from suicidal tendencies; and is prone to hurl itself from its giddy height to perdition, if you so much as breathe."

Paul laughed.

"And its path to destruction," added Miss Carnaby, "leaves a lurid, crimson stain right across the hostess's tablecloth."

"Like Tennyson's 'Maud,' " said Paul, "when

Her feet had touched the meadows,
And left the daisies rosy."

Isabel smiled. "What an apt quotation!"

Paul looked pleased. "I think our treatise upon the Sorrows of Dining promises to be a success," he said.

"What a pretty girl Violet has grown!" remarked Isabel, looking down the table at her cousin.

"Yes; and so like her mother," agreed Paul.

"Is she in love with anybody yet, do you think?"

Now Paul had a strong suspicion that a certain Lord Robert Thistle town and Violet were by no means indifferent to each other; but he was not going to gossip about the Esdailes, even to Isabel, so he said discreetly: "I'm sure I can't say. She would not be very likely to confide in me even if she were."

"I suppose not. But an author like you ought to discover love stories without having to be told them, like some people discover water by means of hazel twigs."

Paul smiled. "I am not an author yet," he said.

"But, joking apart, you really write a good deal, don't you, Mr. Seaton? Uncle Richard tells me that the delightful and fascinating short stories signed P. S., which one comes across now and again in various magazines, are yours."

"They are certainly mine, Miss Carnaby; but I am afraid that their delightfulness and fascination exist only in your rose-coloured imagination."

"Don't be foolish! Every one thinks they are splendid. You must know you are clever, and I call it affectation for people to pretend they don't recognize their own good points. Now I, for instance, never

pretend that I'm not clever. If I'd had my choice I'd rather have been pretty, I confess ; but that is neither here nor there."

"It would be useless for you to pretend that you are not clever ; nobody would be taken in. Clever as you are, you would not be clever enough for that."

"You don't know how clever I am," said Isabel ; "I once succeeded in making a man think I was not clever."

"And what effect did the delusion have upon him ?"

"He fell in love with me on the spot."

"Still he might have done that, even if he'd known you were clever," suggested Paul. "There is no limit, I believe, to the folly of the heart of man in affairs of this kind. I daresay he knew you were clever all the time, and was only a 'deceiver ever' when he pretended he thought you were not. Men will forgive even cleverness in a woman they really care for ; you have no idea how weak they are."

"As long as the woman is not cleverer than they are themselves, I suppose."

"Of course ; that goes without saying. Besides, no man is so supernaturally humble as to believe that the cleverest woman in the world is quite as clever as he is himself. He only knows that she is cleverer than all his friends."

"If ever I think a man is in danger of thinking me too clever," said Isabel meditatively, "I always ask him how to spell a word—any word will do, provided it is not too difficult for him. You can't think how it at once restores the equilibrium between the sexes. And if—in addition to spelling the word—he can give you its derivation, both the man and the scholar stand for ever vindicated."

"That's a good plan," said Paul, "a very good plan. Now that you mention it, I notice I have often felt distinct pleasure when a woman has asked me how to spell a word; and the pleasure has risen to pure joy when I have superadded the derivation."

"But you are wandering from the point," said Isabel reprovingly. "I was saying how I liked your stories, and you were saying that you weren't really clever."

"Excuse me, Miss Carnaby, you are inaccurate; what I said, or intended to say, was that I thought I was so clever that I ought to do something better than write such stories as those. Humility is not one of my many virtues, as you will perceive as you come to know me better."

"It isn't one of mine, either."

"No; I'd already perceived that, though I have only known you for half an hour."

Isabel laughed. "You are very candid."

"Candour has a place, I am glad to say, in my *répertoire* of excellencies. I derive much pleasure from the exercise of it myself, and as no one takes any notice of my opinion, it really doesn't do any harm."

"I suppose you feel you ought to write a big book, instead of sticking to short stories?"

"I should like to write a big book," replied Paul.

"Well, I am sure you can, and therefore I am sure you will."

Paul looked at the speaker appreciatively. "It is true that if a man can write a book he will do it sooner or later; but how did you come to know a thing like that?"

"I can't tell. I knew it of myself without being told. I always say that writing is like flirting; if you can't do

it, nobody can teach you to do it; and if you can do it, nobody can keep you from doing it."

Paul smiled. "You are quite right. If I don't write a book it will prove that I can't write a book. But, all the same, I hope and believe I can."

"I'm afraid I must talk a bit to the man on my other side," said Isabel. "I don't want to, but he keeps clearing his throat like a clock that is going to strike, and I cannot any longer disregard the sign."

"I suppose I also ought to exchange pleasure for duty, and endeavour to converse with the old lady on my left."

"You ought to change new lamps for old, you mean," suggested Isabel. "Allow me to express a hope that the old one will be as brilliant as the new."

"It is unwise to hope for impossibilities, and generally leads to disappointment," replied Paul.

After Paul and Isabel had duly fulfilled their duty to their neighbours, Isabel said: "You mustn't be in too great a hurry to begin your book. Experience, as well as genius, is required for the writing of books."

"That is very true, and that is why I am waiting. I don't want to seem conceited, but I am speaking candidly to you now, and I feel and know I have the power to write what would be worth reading. But where I am weak is in the experience of life. I have always lived in a small world, and small worlds—though perhaps the most comfortable places of residence—are not good training-grounds or seminaries of learning."

"My experience is that small worlds and big worlds are pretty much alike," replied Isabel. "I have lived in both, and I don't see much difference."

"I don't mean that small worlds are really less interesting than big ones. Human nature is, of course, the

same in both; and it is human nature that is the most interesting thing in life. As you say, the deeper things are the same in small worlds as in great ones, but their outer aspects differ in different cases; and the more cases one sees, the wider are one's sympathies."

"But seeing a lot of people is not knowing them," objected Isabel. "We are all more or less like the Man in the Iron Mask, and take abundant pains to hide our real faces from our fellows."

"Which we have no right to do, in my opinion. We are not bound to lay our souls bare for every one to look at, but as much as we do show ought to be part of our real selves, and not a mask to put people off the scent. It seems to me that to take the trouble to conceal ourselves, argues an exaggerated idea of our own importance."

"Which reminds me," said Isabel, "of a funny old man we once met at a *table d'hôte*; he told us in strict confidence that he was the mayor of Little Pettifog, but begged us not to mention it again as he was travelling *incog*."

Paul laughed. "A most happy instance! It seems to me that there are a good many mayors of Little Pettifog travelling *incog*.; don't you think so?"

"Yes ! do; and—like you—I have no patience with them."

"But, on the other hand," said Paul, "I think it is, as a rule, our own fault if people behave like the Man in the Iron Mask with us, and proves that we are the same. Don't you think that the world is a very fair mirror, and that people treat us very much as we treat them?"

"Certainly; and if you are single-minded towards your friends, and think more of what is due to them than

to you, they in turn will be single-minded towards you, and think more of what is due to you than to themselves. At least, that has been my experience so far."

"And mine too."

"And in the same way if you are time-serving, you will find other people the same," added Isabel.

"Of course, when we are very young, we are anxious that other people should adequately love and fulfil their duty to us; while, as we grow older, we realize that that is their part of the business, not ours, and that what we have to do is to adequately love and fulfil our duty to them. This is merely a question of growth, and the development of a sense of proportion."

"I believe in human nature as a whole. I have trusted a good many people more or less, and none of them as yet have ever failed me," Isabel said.

"And never will as long as you trust them," added Paul; "but only when you begin to doubt them."

"I quite agree with you there. Again, I do not a bit mind being laughed at; in fact, if the joke is a good one, I am ready to join in it; so I generally show my real self to people, and am not afraid of what is called 'giving myself away'. Consequently people as a rule show their real selves to me."

"It is a great mistake to be afraid of 'giving oneself away'. I don't know a more paralyzing form of fear."

"It seems to me," replied Isabel, "that life is very much like swimming or skating; one has to let oneself go before one can get on at all."

"And we have all got to be ourselves. The best possible edition of ourselves, I admit; but still ourselves, and not anybody else; and therefore we must expand along our own lines, and not along other people's."

"Do you remember the duchess's baby in *Alice in*

Wonderland, who 'made a very ugly baby but a very handsome pig'? Now so many people are like that; they make stupendous efforts to become ugly babies, instead of settling down comfortably as handsome pigs."

"Milton's Satan was wiser in his generation than the children of light," remarked Paul; "he preferred ruling as a handsome pig to serving as an ugly baby, if you remember; only he put the case in more forceful words. Still the sentiment is the same. But he was not supposed to take the highest view."

"But wouldn't you rather be the ruling pig than the serving baby?" asked Isabel.

"I'm afraid I would; but that doesn't make it right."

"Still you said just now that we must be ourselves and not anybody else."

"And I say so still, Miss Carnaby; but one must not press the rule too far. We must, of course, live our own lives and cultivate our own characters, and must not try to grow roses on apple-trees nor lilies on oaks. But our healthy desire for individuality must not carry us into the error of becoming a law unto ourselves, and doing whatsoever is right in our own eyes."

"I think I see what you mean."

"I speak from experience," continued Paul; "as I told you, I was brought up in a narrow world, and also in a very religious one; and I was taught that few things were right and that many things were wrong, and that we must all try and conform ourselves to the same pattern. As I grew older, and saw more of the world, I found that this view of life was too narrow a one, and then I joined in the modern worship of Individuality and the glorification of Humanity; and I abused all law and order because they tended to cramp and conform the

individual. Now a second reaction has set in ; and I see that the Truth lies half way between the two extremes—as, in fact, it generally does.”

Isabel's eyes glistened ; Paul interested her extremely. “Then you mean that one must be the master of one's individuality, and not its slave ?” she said.

“Or in better words, ‘As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness,’” answered Paul ; “you see, the highest life is a life of contradictions, and this is merely one of them.”

“Tell me about your own people,” said Isabel impulsively ; “I'm sure they must be nice.”

And Paul, to his surprise, found himself telling Miss Carnaby all about his father and his mother and Joanna, and his life at Oxford, and his boating ; and his struggle to get on, and his dreams of fame. And Isabel seemed to understand it all as thoroughly as he did himself.

Paul had never talked so well in his life before. He admired Miss Carnaby enough to desire above all things to make a good impression on her ; and he was not yet sufficiently in love with her to be awkward and tongue-tied in her presence. When a man admires without loving, he is conversationally at his best. There comes a later stage when he utters banalties, and makes inane jokes, and inwardly curses himself for appearing such an ass in the sight of the prettiest eyes in the world ; and he has no idea that the prettiest eyes in the world see through a stone wall as far as most people, and very much prefer this style of conversation to rounded sentences and finished periods.

As Paul sat smoking in his own room that night he said to himself ; “I never saw a woman with such blue eyes in my life”.

Which was not true ; he had seen scores of women

with equally blue eyes, but he had never taken the trouble to notice them.

Then he mused, his thoughts still running on Isabel: "Think of calling such a girl as that vain! She isn't a bit vain. It is the other women that are so beastly jealous of her!"

Which also was not true; Isabel was extremely vain, and Paul had already done his best to make her more so; but his eyes were blinded that he could not see.

CHAPTER VIII.

Elton Manor.

"Love," she said, "is just a game
That does for summer weather!"
"Love," he answered, "is a flame
Putting lesser lights to shame:
Making wealth and rank and fame
Weigh lighter than a feather!"
"Sure," she cried, "we mean the same;
Love is but a fancy name
For you and me together."

WHEN Paul Seaton and Dick Esdaile were respectively twenty-six and thirteen, the former was offered the post of editor to the new magazine, *The Pendulum*, and the latter was considered fit to enter Eton. So Paul concluded his pleasant life at Esdaile Court and went to live in London, to prepare himself the more fully for that great book he meant to write some day. By that time his friendship with Miss Carnaby was an established factor in his existence. Paul called it friendship, because he was as yet too poor to call it by any other name; but the other name was ready, as soon as Paul had secured a sufficient status and income to allow him to rechristen the sentiment. He was very glad to take up his abode in London. But, there again, London was only a euphemism for Isabel. Living in London meant seeing Isabel frequently; therefore London was the most desirable place of residence under the sun.

Lady Farley was always "at home" on Thursday afternoons, and consequently Thursday became Paul's Sabbath. He called as often as he dared; and when he felt it but decent to allow a Thursday to elapse without his dropping in at Prince's Gate, he sympathized with the Irish peasant who said: "His Riverence is going to Dublin Fair, so there will be no Sunday this week".

And Isabel also measured time by Thursday afternoons, and felt such seasons a blank indeed if they did not bring Paul. She waited till he arrived before she ordered up the second brew of tea, and she took care to pour his cup out first; she talked to him for as much time as she could spare from other visitors; and listened to him all the time that she was conversing with them, and he was talking to somebody else; she introduced him only to clever men and to plain women; and, in short, she generally behaved herself as all right-minded and right-mannered young women do under similar circumstances. She derived almost as much happiness as Paul did from their friendship; but she pretended that she did not know that friendship was only a *nom de plume*; all the same, she could have found the right name in the dictionary with her eyes shut.

Tickets of admission into Eden are variously worded; and Paul Seaton received one—after he had been for a year or so editor of *The Pendulum*—couched in the following terms:—

"DEAR MR. SEATON,

"Sir Benjamin, Isabel and I leave town on the 10th, and we shall be so pleased to see you if you will run down to Farley Castle on the following Saturday, and spend the Sunday with us.

"Yours very truly,

"CAROLINE FARLEY."

When Paul arrived at Farley Castle on that blissful

and broiling Saturday afternoon, he found a distinguished company drinking tea upon the lawn. The Esdailes were there, with Violet; and there was a Peer and a Cabinet Minister; also Lord Robert Thistlethorn, a younger son of the Marquis of Wallingford; likewise Miss Ethel Gordon, a celebrated beauty; and one or two others, that merely served as padding.

Lady Farley duly presented Paul to her other guests, and he sat down to be refreshed in (and by) their company.

"That is a capital article of yours on art and education in the current number of *The Pendulum*, Seaton," remarked Sir Benjamin, after a due discussion of the heat of the weather and the lateness of Saturday trains.

"It is very kind of you to say so," replied Paul; "but I felt it was far too large a subject to be treated in so small a space, and my limits handicapped me a good deal."

"I also read it with much interest," said Lord Wrexham, "though I fear I did not agree with it all. It appears to me that we require education to make us understand art, rather than that art is in itself an education."

Paul shook his head. "Of course education helps us with technique; but I think that art itself is independent of education. The artist, like the poet, is born, not made."

"Then do you mean to say," asked Lord Wrexham, "that the artist of to-day is none the better for the art produced in the centuries that lie behind him?"

"He is a richer man," replied Paul, "but not, I think, a better artist. There is no heritage in art, as there is in science. The artist is complete in himself, without ancestors or successors."

"Like Melchizedek," suggested Sir Benjamin.

"Exactly," said Paul, "but the man of science, on the contrary, builds on foundations which his predecessors have laid, and reaps what they have sown."

"I think you are about right," remarked Mr. Kesterton, the Cabinet Minister; "an ordinary plumber now knows more than Galileo did, and a chemist's assistant more than Jenner: but our innumerable host of minor poets have not yet out-Shakespeared Shakespeare, nor do our modern impressionists put Raphael and Michael Angelo to shame."

"Still some of the modern pictures are very pretty, don't you think?" chimed in Lady Esdaile, "and so much more interesting than the old ones. Do you know, I get rather tired of nothing but Madonnas and Holy Families? Of course they are very nice in their way, and devout and religious and all that; but if I had to choose a picture, I'd much rather have a hunting scene or a railway station or a Scotch moor."

Mr. Kesterton did not answer. Some men, he felt, were appointed to govern kingdoms, and some to talk to silly women; but no man could reasonably be expected to do both.

"My lady's tastes are modern," said Sir Richard, smiling.

"Yes, they are," agreed Sir Richard's wife. "I'd rather read a new novel than all Shakespeare's things put together; and I enjoy Gilbert and Sullivan far more than Handel and Mozart."

"So do I, Lady Esdaile," chimed in Lord Robert Thistletown. "I am 'the heir of all the ages in the foremost files of time,' and I cannot waste my time in looking back, like Lot's wife."

"But if, as you say, the artist is born not made, how can art be an education?" inquired Lord Wrexham.

"Art is really the interpretation of nature," replied Paul; "therefore the artist has the power to reveal to others what he alone has the eyes to discover for himself. He will not teach other men to be artists; he will only show them what he has seen. Do I make myself clear, Lord Wrexham? I know what I mean, but I am afraid I put it rather badly."

"Not at all; I quite grasp your meaning," said his lordship graciously; "though I am not yet sure that I concur with it."

"If art is an integral part of a good education, as Mr. Seaton asserts," remarked Mr. Kesterton, "we shall have to spend more money on public picture-galleries; and how the Exchequer of the future will stand it, goodness only knows. I am thankful to think that by that time I shall be where budgets cease from troubling."

"I am going to write an article for *The Pendulum* on love as education—a sort of opposition shop to Mr. Seaton's school of art," said Isabel Carnaby. "There is really nothing so admirable from an educational point of view as the process known as 'falling in love'; and I consider that a Government that makes education compulsory, ought to insist upon every one's falling in love at least once before he or she is five-and-twenty. I should call it 'passing the seventh standard,' seven being the perfect number, you know."

"A capital idea, my dear young lady!" said Mr. Kesterton graciously, for Isabel always amused him. "Should you erect special schools for the purpose, may I ask?"

"Yes, gorgeous red and white palaces, like the board-schools; and they would be called 'Highest Grade Schools,' and I should superintend them myself"

"And no one better qualified! Is it impertinent to ask

if you would combine the office of object with that of instructress?"

"Not necessarily. Of course it is better for men to fall in love with me than with any one else—teaches them more, I mean, and bores them less. But I shouldn't make it a *sine quâ non*. I should advise it, but not insist upon it. If they preferred to do so, the pupils might fall in love with somebody else; but it would be like learning literary style from *The Polite Letter Writer*, instead of from the classics."

"I should undertake the girls' department," cried Lord Robert; "it is more than a liberal education to a woman to fall in love with me—it includes all the extras, and a year's finishing abroad into the bargain."

Isabel shook her head. "I'm not so sure about that."

"It is so. When a girl falls in love with me, she realizes at once that brains and beauty and wealth are mere worthless and vulgar attributes; but that a heart of gold, beating under a pocket of very small silver, is the only thing really worthy of a woman's regard. This has a most elevating and refining effect on their dear little characters, bless 'em! It has indeed! Therefore I shall put aside my constitutional shyness, and undertake the girls' department of the 'Highest Grade School'."

"You have no constitutional shyness to put aside, Lord Bobby," said Lady Farley; "so your sacrifice to the common weal is not so stupendous after all."

"How you misjudge me!" sighed Lord Robert. "It is ever my fate to be misjudged by my dearest and best! Shyness is my bane, my besetment; and it is only my exquisite unselfishness which enables me to overcome it as I do, in order to make other people happy by the

uninterrupted flow of my improving conversation. And this is all the thanks I get."

"I suppose everybody feels shy sometimes," said Miss Carnaby.

"Not everybody," argued Lord Robert; "take my word for it, you never do."

"Yes I do, under certain circumstances."

"When? do tell us," besought Violet Esdaile.

Isabel thought for a moment. "I am shy of people who make me feel things," she replied slowly.

"Do you mean you feel shy of a man if you think he is going to make you an offer, or to pull one of your teeth out?" inquired Lord Robert with friendly interest.

"Roughly speaking, yes."

"That's a pity! Because in either case it is sport to them, you see; so it is unfortunate if it is death to you."

Isabel smiled. "My dear Lord Bobby, how absurd you are! Now perhaps you will respond to my confidence, and tell us when you feel shy."

Bobby thought for a moment. "When my boots creak," he answered.

Everybody laughed. "It is no laughing matter, I can assure you," he continued. "I've got a pair now that make me feel as timid as an unfledged school-girl every time I put them on. I wore them to go to church only last Sunday; and they sang such a processional hymn to themselves all the way up the aisle, that by the time I reached our pew I was half dead with shame, and 'the beauty born of murmuring sound' had 'passed into my face'; but it wasn't the type of beauty that was becoming to me—it was too anxious and careworn for my *retroussé* style."

"Weren't your people awfully ashamed of you?" asked Isabel.

"There were none of them there except my mother; and she sat at the far end of the pew, and tried to look as if I were only a collateral."

"I wonder if your mother ever feels shy?" remarked Violet.

"Dreadfully, of her own maid. She has had her for a long time; and I believe that when a maid has had a right of way across your head for over seven years, she can do your hair in what style she likes and you may not interfere. That, I am told, is the law with regard to rights of way."

"Do you ever feel shy?" inquired Isabel of Mr. Kesterton.

"Only when I'm introduced to babies, and their mothers look as if they expected me to kiss them—to kiss the babies, I mean—not the mothers; that would not make me feel nearly so shy. I am always being godfather to the terrible little things, and giving them spoons; but I confine myself to the silver variety."

"Are you many godfathers?"

"This is what I am, Miss Carnaby. I am one husband, three fathers, nine grandfathers and seventeen godfathers—thirty gentlemen in one, so ten times better than Cerberus. And what it costs me in presents is something fabulous."

Isabel turned to Lord Wrexham. "When are you shy?"

"Always. I invariably feel that I am boring people, and this makes me bore them all the more."

"And you, Uncle Benjamin?"

"When I go out shooting, my dear. I am a bad shot at best; and, knowing this, I am consequently generally at my worst."

"My governor is a first-rate shot," announced Lord Robert proudly. "I know no young man who is equal to him; but I'm a poor hand at the job myself. Now-a-days fathers shoot better than their sons, as a rule, I think; a proof of the decadence of the race. (That's a good sentence! I shall wait till you have all forgotten it, and then make use of it again.) Does your father shoot much?" he inquired, turning to Paul.

Paul smiled. "My father is a Methodist minister," he said, "so he knows nothing about sport."

"Dear me, how queer!" exclaimed Ethel Gordon, looking at Paul with as much curiosity as if he had said his father was a giraffe; but Lord Robert came to the rescue. "I've got an uncle in that line of business," he remarked airily; "at least he is a bishop; and he is the best old chap I ever met in my life—a regular saint, don't you know? I daresay your governor is the same."

"He is a good man," answered Paul simply.

"So is my Uncle Ambrose; and there is nothing like it after all. It takes time, you bet, to be as good as that; but it pays in the long run. I wish you knew my uncle; you'd like him. He gives away everything he has to charity, and he really cares for nothing in the world but how to make other folks better and happier. He is the Bishop of Ditchester."

"I know Lord Ambrose Thistlethorn by name, of course, well," said Paul.

"It is a beastly see," continued Bobby; "all smoke and manufactures and working men, and things of that kind. They have offered him better ones, but he will stay on there because he thinks he can do more good among poor people than among rich ones; and I guess he is about right."

"That is very noble of him!"

"Oh! he is like that all through; a regular good sort, out and out; but his wife is simply awful. She is always worrying him to go to a place where there would be a bigger palace, and more swagger friends for her; and she is for ever preaching to the poor old man about the claims of birth, and the duties of rank, and rot of that sort."

"Poor Lord Ambrose!" said Isabel sympathetically.

"She is simply sickening," continued Bobby, "when she gets on her high horse, and rates the bishop for not properly fulfilling the duties of his position and the claims of his station; she feels those claims so strongly herself, she says, that she should consider it a sin to disregard them. She was the daughter of an archdeacon, you know," and Bobby chuckled to himself.

"She can't bear me," said Lady Esdaile; "she thinks I am worldly because I wear a fringe, and dance round-dances. And so she gives me a cheap and religious little book every time she meets me."

Lord Bobby clapped his hands with delight. "I know them," he cried. "*The Mammon Worshipers* and *Outlandish Women* are two of her 'choicest gifts in store'; but she has plenty of others for those who need them. What irritates me in the woman is that she is such a toady; she dismisses her servants without characters if she finds they are not strict teetotalers; and yet once, when that horrid Lord Watertight was regularly drunk at a party, she said it was his animal spirits only that carried him away, and that he was a most lovable young man. Spirits carried him away, I confess, but they were vegetable and not animal ones."

"That was just like her," said Lady Esdaile.

"She not only believes that the king can do no wrong, but that the peerage can do no wrong, either—

which is carrying a good principle to an untenable extreme," continued Lord Bobby. "But did you ever hear the poem that Lady Eleanor Gregory wrote about her?"

"No; was it very smart?" asked Lady Farley. "Eleanor's verses generally are."

"Awfully good. I wish I could repeat it to you, but I can only remember one verse. This is it:—

"A bishop must not revel in strong drink;
Though he may take a little, I have heard,
Just for the sake of—no, I do not think
It maidenly to use the Pauline word:
I only say he'll take some, should there cease
To be beneath his apron perfect peace."

Everybody was amused and Mr. Kesterton shouted with laughter. "Capital," he cried, "capital! Lady Eleanor is a clever little girl. But it is a pity she does not confine herself to penning humorous verses, instead of indulging in the love-sick ditties we frequently read in the magazines above her signature."

"Still she can write good poetry," remarked Paul.

"That may be; but I don't like young ladies to wear the willow in print in that fashion. I may be old-fashioned, but that is my opinion."

"And mine too," agreed Lord Wrexham.

"I expect her willow is an artificial flower," said Isabel, "or she would not wave it before the public eye. The people who have really felt things don't write about them."

"Then don't you think the faithless swain of her poems is a real person?" wondered Ethel Gordon.

"I once asked her if he was," answered Lord Robert. "Everybody was asking the question behind her back, I told her, and I thought it a more effective plan to ask it before her face."

"And what did she say? Was she angry with you?" inquired Miss Gordon.

"Not she; she merely laughed, and said she had drawn a beau at a venture, and it was therefore only a fancy portrait."

"Very smart again," murmured Mr. Kesterton approvingly. "Girls who can make jokes like that ought not to waste their time reeling out poetry as easily as if they were raveling an old stocking. They should leave that to the dull, sentimental women, who wear their hearts on their sleeves and their curls down their backs."

"Was Lady Ambrose very furious at the poem?" asked Lady Esdaile. "It was just the sort of thing to make her mad if any one but a ladyship had written it."

"I don't think she ever saw it," replied Bobby; "but the bishop did, and enjoyed it immensely. He loves a joke, does the dear old bishop, and loves it all the more if his wife is out of it. I remember that she was described therein as 'a godly Venus, rising from the sea'; and my father has called Lady A. 'the godly Venus' ever since."

Mr. Kesterton chuckled appreciatively.

"What I can't stand is humbug," continued Lord Robert; "and when I see that woman ready to sell what she is pleased to call her soul for money and position and all that, and then hear her jawing against Mammon and worldliness and things of that sort, it makes me feel positively sick."

Paul smiled, and could not help thinking of Mrs. Martin. He remembered a tale he had once heard of some Staffordshire colliers who went to see the sights of London, and their surprise reached its height when one exclaimed: "I say, Bill, they've got the same old moon here as we've got at Tipton!" The sights of London

are still very wonderful and well worth seeing; but they've got the same old human nature there as they've got at Tipton, and everywhere else under the sun.

That "week-end" was a season of perfect bliss to Paul; partly because he was in the company of some of the best-mannered and most brilliant people in England but principally because Isabel Carnaby was nice to him. He carried her prayer-book to church for her on Sunday morning, and the scent of Russia-leather sent a thrill through him all his life afterwards; while the sound of her voice in the hymns made those particular psalms stand out from the rest of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* for ever in Paul Seaton's ears.

On their way back from church, Isabel asked him if he had begun to write his book.

"Not yet," answered he; "you know you told me not to be in a hurry, and I've taken your advice. I feel I am decidedly mellower than I was, but I'm not yet ripe."

"Shall you write under your own name?"

"No. If you write under your own name you cannot help being handicapped, to some extent, by your circumstances and surroundings. You know what your friends will expect of you, and you feel bound in some measure to fulfil their expectations. But if you write under a *nom de plume* you are quite free."

"I see what you mean, and I think I agree with you," said Isabel.

"For instance, I should say lots of things that my father would not agree with, my opinions on most matters being different from his, though my admiration and respect for his character are greater than they ever were. He has found truth and righteousness, and I hope to find them some day; but I shall travel by dif-

ferent roads and use different methods from those by which he has been led. Mind you, I do not say, or even think, that mine are better than his, but they are different, owing to the difference in our characters and our generations."

"I perfectly understand," said Isabel sympathetically.

"Then, do you see? if I wrote as his son, he would have to bear in a measure the onus of my work, and that would not be fair to him."

"You are quite right. But do not wait too long before you begin your book; do not wait till you are *blasé* and cynical and have lost all your illusions."

"Do you like people to keep their illusions?" Paul asked.

"Yes, oh! yes. I always pray that I may never outlive my illusions or my front teeth, though all else may fail me."

Paul laughed. Then he said more seriously: "It seems to me that the more you see of the world and men and things, and the better you understand them, the less cynical you ought to be. I believe that *tout comprendre est tout pardonner*."

"I am so glad to hear you say that! It is what I have always thought."

"It disgusts me," continued Paul, "that when people tell you to look at anything as a man of the world, they mean you are to take the most disagreeable view possible."

"I know."

"When you begin life, you think that everything is rose-colour; this is crude. You find that some things are not rose-colour, and then you think that everything is blue-mouldy; this also is crude. But when you have really seen life and the world, you know that some things are rose-colour and some are blue-mouldy, and that the

majority are neither one nor the other. To me the blue-mouldy stage is only one degree less raw and crude than the rose-colour one, and much more objectionable."

"How well you put things!" exclaimed Isabel. "You seem to think all the thoughts which I have thought, but have struggled in vain to express; but you are able also to express them. And one grand thing about you is that you always say all that you think."

Paul smiled. "Not quite all."

"Do you mean that there are Bluebeard's chambers in your heart that even I have not looked into."

"Yes."

"But I want to look in," persisted Isabel.

"But you can't—yet."

"Can I ever?"

"I don't know. It depends on whether you are willing to wait or not. But, as you said to me, you mustn't be in a hurry," replied Paul.

"I know most of your heart and mind; but this, I suppose, is an additional exhibition, like the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud's; and one has to pay sixpence extra to see it."

"Only it isn't a chamber of horrors, and sixpence isn't enough."

"But I've got more than sixpence."

"I know you have, Miss Carnaby, but I haven't; and it is I who have to pay this entrance-fee. That is why I am saving up my money, and editing magazines, and writing stupid stories."

"Do you think I should be interested if I ever did see it?" asked Isabel.

"I don't know."

"But what do you think?"

"You might, or you might not," replied Paul.

"Anyhow you might tell me what it is like. Do tell me what it is like, dear Mr. Seaton."

Paul thought for a moment. "It is rather like an ordinary looking-glass," he said; "in fact *you* couldn't tell the difference."

Isabel laughed. "How silly you are!"

"In some things; but not in this."

"There is the gong!" exclaimed Isabel. "We are late."

At lunch that day Lord Wrexham took upon himself to expound to Paul a new system of surface-drainage, whereof he thought most highly; and so Paul did not again get word with Isabel, till they two started for a walk across the park in the afternoon.

"Lord Wrexham was terribly agrarian to-day, wasn't he?" said Isabel. "He is awfully boring when he begins to explain things."

"But he is a nice man," answered Paul; "and he would be really interesting to listen to, if a fellow wasn't wanting to talk to you all the time instead."

"Oh! I find him dreadfully tiresome when he becomes agricultural and explanatory."

"You really ought not to abuse him, for he admires you most tremendously."

Isabel shrugged her shoulders. "I know he does; men of that age always do. I shouldn't be surprised if you admired me when you are as old as Lord Wrexham."

"I shouldn't, either," said Paul.

"I think I should rather like it if you did."

"Should you? then I'll try. I always try to do what you want, you know, however difficult it may be."

Isabel laughed. "I am fond of admiration," she said.

"So I should have supposed."

"But I'm not one of those tiresome, exacting women,

who are always longing to be first with everybody. I can't stand the sort of women who suffer from what they call 'heart-hunger'. Can you?"

"They are pretty bad," agreed Paul.

"But I'm not like that, am I?"

"No; you like people to admire you, and you take a good deal of trouble to ensure this result: but you are not in the least *exigeante*. I don't think you'd expect to be first with a person unless that person was first with you; and then, of course, you'd have a right to expect it."

"That is quite true; how well you understand me! I don't want men to go in jeopardy of their lives by fetching water for me from the wells of Bethlehem; but I do want them to be ready and willing to take me down to supper at balls, and to bring me refreshments at evening parties."

Paul smiled. "You appear to be a wonderfully reasonable woman."

"I'm so glad you think that! I always consider my 'sweet reasonableness' one of my strong points."

"But it is only because you don't really care," continued Paul; "the minute you begin to care, you'll be as unreasonable as the rest of them."

Isabel frowned. "How horrid you are!"

"Am I? I'm sorry for that. But it grieves my righteous soul to see you hugging your negligences and ignorances, and mistaking them for virtues."

"I wish you were not so nasty!" sighed Isabel; "when you are as nasty as this, it makes a walk with you a toil instead of a pleasure."

"Well, don't make it a danger instead of a toil; which you will do if you walk on that damp grass."

"I shall walk on the damp grass as long as you are disagreeable."

"I wish you wouldn't," and Paul's face grew quite anxious. "You'll be certain to catch cold if you do, and I do so hate you to have a cold. I can see your feet are quite wet already." And then Paul smiled to himself, remembering how Edgar Ford had once said: "A man must be at a woman's feet before he knows when they are getting wet, and is ready to lay his cloak across the puddles to keep them dry".

"I shall walk in the damp till you leave off being disagreeable," persisted Isabel.

"Well, what is it that you want me to say?"

"I want you to say that you think I am a most reasonable woman—not that I only appear to be."

"I can't say that, for it wouldn't be true; but I don't mind saying that I think a reasonable woman the most tiresome and detestable being under heaven."

And then Isabel came off the grass.

"I wish you thought better of me!" she said, with a sigh.

Paul laughed. "I'm very glad I don't. It is quite enough for me as it is, thank you."

"I mean, I wish you said pretty things to me, like other men do."

"But I am nothing if not original."

"It seems very unfortunate," murmured Isabel, "that you are the only man that I want to say pretty things to me, and that therefore you won't say them."

"Pardon me, Miss Carnaby, you are confusing cause and effect. I do not refrain from saying pretty things because you want me to say them, but you want me to say them because I refrain."

"Why are you so fond of making me cross?" asked Isabel with a pout.

"Because it is the most amusing form of sport I

know. I used to think that rowing and fishing ran it close, but now I have decided that making you cross is the most fascinating pastime in the world—bar one."

"You've never tried the other."

"I know I've not. Probably that is why I still retain such a high opinion of it."

"I am not sure that it would amuse you if you did try it."

"Neither am I," replied Paul; "but I'm not going to try it till I am quite sure that it would not amuse you."

"Then don't you like to see me enjoying myself?"

"Certainly, within reasonable limits. I like to see children enjoying themselves, but there are some things that I should refuse to give them as playthings."

"But you would give those things to the children when they were old enough to appreciate them," said Isabel coaxingly.

"Perhaps."

"How soon do you think I shall be old enough to appreciate things?"

Paul smiled. "Perhaps when you have grown tired of living on refreshments at evening parties, and want some water from the well of Bethlehem for a change."

"Then do you despise me for liking refreshments at evening parties?" asked Isabel.

"Not in the least; but I think it is rather a youthful taste, like currant wine or raspberry vinegar. There will come a time when it won't satisfy you, and then you will cry out for living water from the well at Bethlehem—which, by the way, was your metaphor, not mine; but it expresses what I mean."

"And what will happen then?"

"Ah! that I can't say. It will depend upon whether any one out of the legions who have lackeyed you and

taken you down to countless ball-suppers, is ready to go in jeopardy of his life for you; and that only time can show."

Isabel thought for a moment. "There is rather a good lesson for all women in our well-metaphor, isn't there?"

"Yes," replied Paul. "Women, as a rule, make such dreadful mistakes. You see, nothing but love will really satisfy a woman in the long run; and unattractive women, as a rule, acknowledge this. But attractive women get such a lot of admiration that they think at first that admiration will satisfy them."

"I know. Admiration is like porridge—awfully stodging, but you get hungry again almost as soon as you've eaten it."

"Exactly. Therefore," continued Paul, "an attractive woman is more likely to make this mistake than an unattractive one; yet when the time comes that her heart cries out for reality, she will need it quite as much as her less-admired sister, though probably by that time she will have thrown it away, and not be able to find it again. The unattractive woman, on the other hand, treasures up every bit of love she receives, and makes the most of it."

"I see; it is a serious thing to be an attractive woman after all," said Isabel thoughtfully. Then she looked up at Paul and smiled. "But it would be worse to be an unattractive one, wouldn't it? Oh! you don't think I ever shall be, do you, Mr. Seaton—not even when I'm old and grey? Please say you don't."

And Paul said it; and said it several times; and, what is more, he meant what he said.

CHAPTER IX

Indecision.

Do I love you? Can I prove you
More than all the world to me?
Thus I ponder, and I wonder
What my true reply must be.

ONE afternoon, early in the season following Paul's visit to Elton Manor, he and Isabel were seated under a tree in Kensington Gardens. It was one of those days when spring pretends that it is summer, and the parks pretend that they are the country, and all the world pretends that it is young again: nevertheless Paul's face was very serious.

"Miss Carnaby," he said, "I want to speak to you."

Isabel shrugged her shoulders. "I'm sorry for that; and you look such a 'potent, grave and reverend seignior,' that I feel certain you are going to say something disagreeable. Now do think twice before you speak."

"I have thought twice—and twice a million times over."

"Twice a million times over—I wonder how much that is. I cannot do the sum myself, I am such a poor adder—or ought I to say a poor addist? A poor adder sounds so poisonous and serpenty, doesn't it?"

But Paul would not laugh. "Won't you listen to me?" he asked.

"I suppose I have no alternative, as you have paid the penny for my chair, and I am partaking of your hospitality for the time being. But it really is a pity to use up such a lovely afternoon in speaking seriously; serious speaking—like bagatelle—ought to be reserved as an amusement for wet days."

"I really want to speak to you," persisted Paul, "I am not joking."

"My dear sir, I never for a moment imagined you were. Your expression just now would grace a mute at a funeral. And yet you take the trouble to inform me that you are not joking. You might as well have taken the trouble to inform me that you were not swimming, or painting, or driving a cab."

"It really isn't kind of you to go on like this, Miss Carnaby."

"And it really isn't kind of you to spoil such a lovely afternoon by speaking seriously."

Paul did not answer, so Isabel rattled on: "Now you are sulking, and if there is one thing I hate more than another it is a sulky temper. I'd rather have a squint than a sulky temper any day. Besides, dark men should never look sulky, it isn't becoming to them; it gives a lurid, thundery sort of expression to their faces."

Paul still remained silent, but Isabel did not dare to do so for a moment. "Isn't it a jolly afternoon?" she continued; "and these gardens look perfectly lovely. But I hope it isn't going to be too hot for the Wallingfords' ball next week. I can't bear a hot ball-room; your face gets so red, and your fringe goes out of curl, and altogether you look like one of Turner's sunsets in the National Gallery. At least I do, and I can't bear to feel

I'm looking like a sunset. Why don't you smile when a lady talks to you? It is positively refrigerating to talk to a man with an expression like yours. Why don't you smile like a little gentleman, as the nursemaids around us would say?"

"Because I am not amused."

"That is very rude of you! And you are generally such a prettily behaved person. You don't seem to be listening to me, either."

"I'm not," said Paul, "I'm thinking about something else."

"Fie, fie, Master Seaton! whatever will your mamma say when you get home?" cried Isabel, shaking her finger at him.

"When you have quite finished I should like to have my innings," said Paul grimly; "but I don't in the least wish to hurry you."

"You are the most unappreciative man I ever talked to!"

"Look here, Miss Carnaby, it isn't fair to treat a fellow like this. Will you listen to me or will you not? because if you won't I'm going away."

Isabel looked to see if he were in earnest; when Paul was in earnest she knew by experience other people had to be in earnest too.

"All right," she sighed. "Say your say."

Paul's face grew very white. "I never made love to a woman before, and I never shall again, so I am a poor hand at the business. But you know how I love you; and I want to know if you will be my wife."

"Oh, Mr. Seaton!"

"I can't tell you what you are to me," continued Paul; "but you know as well as I do that I've cared for nothing in the world but you ever since that evening at

Esdaile. You have seen how I have hungered for a kind word from you, and how I have starved when it pleased your whim to withhold it from me. You have seen all this and it has amused you. But I think it has done something more than amuse you, or else I shouldn't be speaking like this to you to-day. Am I right, Isabel?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"I didn't mean to speak yet, but I simply cannot go on like this any longer. The thought of you comes between me and everything else, till I cannot carry on my work or do my duty for thinking of you. Sometimes I think you really care a bit, and then I am lifted up to heaven; and sometimes I think you have merely been playing with me all the time, and then I am plunged in the depths of despair. I must know one way or the other. This suspense is killing me."

"Poor boy!" said Isabel gently.

"No; I don't want your pity or your friendship. I want your love or nothing at all. If I cannot have that, I must do my best to put you out of my life altogether. I will not go on like this."

"Still our friendship is very nice," said Isabel weakly.

"It isn't enough for me. It unsettles me and takes away my peace of mind, without giving me happiness in return. I feel that I could do anything with you to help me; I feel I could do something without you altogether; but I know I can do nothing as long as I am tortured by seeing daily my heart's desire, and not knowing if it can ever be mine or not."

"I wonder my friendship doesn't please you more," said Isabel with some pique. "Other men have found it both satisfying and stimulating."

Paul smiled scornfully. "Not the men who have loved you as I love you," he said.

"Other men love me as much as you do," persisted Isabel.

"Then let them love you, and let me go," replied Paul roughly. "I may be poor and obscure, and a nobody in your world, but I'm a man all the same, and I'll let no fine lady make a plaything of me."

"You are very unkind!"

"I am very unhappy."

Isabel pouted. "It is your own fault if you are. I'm sure I am nice enough to you to please the most exacting man."

"But I don't thank you for mere niceness. Can't you understand? You are nice to all the men that admire you; but there are some things a fellow can't and won't share. I am asking for bread ——"

"And therefore when diamonds and rubies fall from my lips you call them stones," concluded Isabel flip-pantly.

Paul's face grew stern. "Don't laugh at me," he said; "it is doing both yourself and me an injustice. If you cannot love me, tell me so, and let me go out of the sight of your face and live my own life as best I can; and if you can love me, tell me so, and make me the happiest man this side Paradise. But for pity's sake don't play with me."

Isabel's eyes filled with tears. "Please forgive me," she said. "It was horrid of me, but I did not mean it."

"I know you didn't," replied Paul, and his voice shook. "Oh! my darling, do you think I don't realize all that I am asking of you? Do you think I don't know all that you will have to give up if you marry a poor man

like me? But I want you, dear, and I cannot do without you."

"You have always been very good to me," said Isabel.

"Tell me—I cannot bear the suspense any longer—is there any chance for me?"

Isabel looked Paul full in the face. "I will tell you the truth," she said; "I owe you that, at any rate. The best side of me does love you, and wants always to be with you, and knows that I can never be a really good woman apart from you. But there is another side of me which cares for rank and wealth and power, and fights against your influence all the time."

Paul's eyes were very pitiful. "I understand," he said.

"The question is," continued Isabel, "which of my two selves is the stronger—the one that loves you or the one that doesn't. And you must leave me to fight it out by myself."

"Yes," answered Paul; "that is but fair and just. I will wait another week patiently; but after that I must know my fate once and for all."

"And you must always remember," added Isabel, "that the self that is on your side is my best self; and that if I decide against you, I shall be choosing evil rather than good."

"Aunt Caroline," said Isabel to Lady Farley the next day, "Paul Seaton has asked me to be his wife."

"I knew he would," replied her aunt; "men with chins like his never make love without meaning it."

"I am to give him his answer in a week; and I want you to advise me."

"My dear child, I dare not give advice on so important a matter. You are twenty-seven, and therefore

old enough to know your own mind, and to please yourself."

"I mean to please myself, Aunt Caroline; but I want you to help me to find out what will please me."

"I will do all I can in that line with pleasure; but the decision must rest with you alone. Tell me your *pros* and *cons*."

Isabel thought for a moment. "The *pros* are that he is a good man, and a gentleman, and I love him, and he has the nicest eyes in the whole world."

Her aunt smiled. "And the *cons*?"

"The *cons* are that he has neither money nor position, and would be considered a poor match in the world in which I live."

"Do you think you would be happy with him?" asked Lady Farley.

"Radiantly so. He is so clever that I should let him make up my mind upon every subject. I think it must be lovely to have a husband to make up one's mind for one!"

"Some women prefer making up the husband's mind for him. It is merely a matter of taste, my dear Isabel. The only thing to be avoided is two separate minds in a house, each making itself up."

"I know," laughed Isabel; "a sort of William-and-Mary business."

"Exactly."

"What should you do if you were in my place, Aunt Caroline?"

"Personally, it would not amuse me to marry Mr. Seaton; on the contrary, it would bore me considerably, he is so didactic and so overpoweringly in earnest; but that is no reason why it should not amuse you."

"It wouldn't amuse me to marry Uncle Benjamin, you see; and yet it amuses you."

"Not always, my dear; I have known it have quite an opposite effect. But then your uncle is a G.C.B. and a rich man, and those things amuse me a good deal."

"But love ought to count for something," said Isabel timidly.

"Of course it ought; I am allowing for that; but it counts a good deal more with some women than it does with others, and a woman should take this into consideration. Some women positively enjoy a little mild starvation flavoured with romance."

"I should, I think."

"Then take it, my dear," said Lady Farley; "positive starvation is always, I believe, indigestible; but the moderate starvation, which your own comfortable little income would allow of, might prove quite a treat to people who like picnics."

"By 'moderate starvation' I suppose you mean doing one's own hair and buttoning one's own boots?"

"Yes, and everything else *en suite*. This again is a matter of taste, and each must please herself; but what I cannot stand is a woman who deliberately chooses love in a cottage, and then throws the cottage in her husband's teeth, and omits the love. Make your choice, I say; but when you have made it, stick to it."

"I have no patience with girls who will marry poor men, and then quarrel with them for being poor," agreed Isabel.

"Neither have I."

"If I married Paul, I should never be nasty to him afterwards because he wasn't rich."

"I should hope you would not," said Lady Farley. "I should be ashamed of having brought you up if you were. But that is all the more reason for not being in a hurry."

"I know it is."

"I also think, my dear Isabel, that among the *cons*, you should reckon up the fact that Lord Wrexham is very much in love with you, and that you might be a peeress if you were so minded."

"Yes."

"You should also make a note that Society will invite Lady Wrexham to dinner, but Mrs. Paul Seaton only to the reception afterwards."

Isabel winced. "I know that also."

"Then, my dear child, there is no more to be said. This is the evidence: it is for you to consider the verdict."

And Isabel did consider it to the exclusion of every other subject; and grew pale and wan with the conflict betwixt her contending inclinations. But—true to her order—she fulfilled all her social engagements, and talked and laughed as courageously as ever.

The Marchioness of Wallingford's ball was one of the events of the season—and it fell on the eve of the day when Isabel was to give Paul his final answer. Yet the girl was as undecided as ever when she donned her war-paint.

During the evening she sat out a dance with Lord Bobby. He and Isabel had become firm and fast friends since he had confided to her his attachment to her cousin Violet, and she had sympathized with him.

"You don't look very flourishing," said Lord Bobby kindly, as they sat together under the shelter of a huge palm. "Has any one been bullying you?"

"Life in general has been bullying me," replied Isabel sadly.

"How vile of it! I never thought so badly of life before. It certainly won't be worth living if it begins to be rude to you; I shall have to give it the cut direct by committing suicide, if it insults you again."

"Oh! Bobby, do help me," cried Isabel, with a sudden impulse laying a beseeching little hand on his arm. "You are so young and foolish, and everybody else is so old and wise. I'm old and wise too, and I'm sick of it."

"Poor little girl, what is wrong?"

"Paul Seaton wants me to marry him, and I want it too—but I'm not sure if I've the courage to make such a bad match. I know I'm a wretch to feel like that, but that is how I feel."

Bobby's pleasant face grew grave. "I know," he said.

"The good part of me loves him, but the worldly part of me loves money and position and pleasure, and I don't know which is in the majority."

"If you were only a Government instead of a woman, you'd find out by means of a dissolution," remarked his lordship: "then try the same method."

"How do you mean?" asked Isabel, looking puzzled.

"In the event of your dissolution what should you do?"

"If I were dying do you mean? Oh! then, of course, I should care only for Paul; and money and all that would matter nothing to me."

"Then why not apply the dissolution test to a woman as well as to a Government?" suggested Lord Robert.

"There is a good deal in what you say. I feel sure that if I sent Paul away my heart would cry out for him sooner or later."

"Then why not let it cry now, when there is a chance of an *R.S.V.P.*?"

"Because I am afraid to give up all the rank and pleasure and luxury that have made life so pleasant to me. It is selfish of me, I know, but I can't help it."

"You seem in a regular fix!" said Lord Bobby with much sympathy.

"Every one I consult is so old and wise, and knows so well the value of outside things. Does everybody grow worldly as they grow older, I wonder?"

"Everybody except mothers," answered Bobby simply. "They never get old or wise or anything horrid."

"But I haven't got a mother," said Isabel, with a little catch in her voice.

"Poor little girl!" said Bobby, and there were tears in his honest blue eyes.

"You see," continued Isabel, "if I marry Paul, the frivolous side of me may come to the front when it is too late, and I may spoil his life by becoming a dissatisfied and grumbling wife."

Bobby nodded.

"While, on the other hand, if I let him go, I shall become hard and shallow and worldly, and the best part of my nature will die of starvation. Oh! Bobby, what am I to do?"

Bobby thought profoundly for several seconds; then he said: "Seaton is a good fellow, there is no doubt of that; but the question just now is not what is he in himself, but how much does he count for in your estimate of life?"

"That is just what I want to find out," sighed Isabel.

"Look here!" continued Bobby; "when he comes into a room does it seem to you as if the place was full

of pink light, and the band was playing 'God save the Queen' outside?"

"Yes, yes, it feels just like that," assented Isabel eagerly.

"Then if you've got to that stage, you mustn't let him go; there is only one course open to you. When you feel like that, you can't of course be sure that you'll be happy with that particular person; but you may be certain that you'll be utterly miserable without him."

"There is my next partner searching for me," said Isabel, rising from her seat. "Thank you, Bobby; how you have helped me!"

A few days after Lady Wallingford's ball, Lady Esdaile called upon her sister-in-law.

"My dear Caroline," she began, "is it true that Isabel has engaged herself to that young Seaton?"

"Perfectly true," replied Lady Farley with a sigh.

"How funny of her! He isn't at all well off; but Isabel has got her own money, so that won't matter as much as it might if she hadn't anything; though I can't help feeling it is a poor match for a girl who has been run after as much as Isabel."

"Isabel is old enough to please herself."

"Of course she is, Caroline; I'd been married for ages and ages when I was as old as Isabel. But please don't think I'm saying anything against Mr. Seaton, because I'm not. He is a dear man, and no one knows how adorable he was once when Dick was ill. I was always confusing the gargle with the medicine, and wanting to give the dear boy the wrong one by mistake; but Mr. Seaton never once mistook them for each other. Wasn't it awfully clever of him?"

"He is generally considered to be a clever man," remarked Lady Farley drily.

"I know he is; and so good and religious too. Of course it is awfully nice for a man to be clever and religious and all that, but it seems a funny reason for marrying him, don't you think?"

Lady Farley smiled satirically. "Funnier than if he were rich or had a title," she said.

"But Isabel always was rather original, Caroline. I wonder if she will be happy with Mr. Seaton."

"That is the idea, I believe. Of course one cannot tell yet how it will work out."

"And you will miss her, I dare say," continued Lady Esdaile, not noticing that her sister-in-law winced at this remark; "it will quite be like losing a daughter. I should mind dreadfully if Violet were to get married—and yet I should mind more if she didn't, I think. It really is difficult to know always what one does want."

"And still more difficult to get it," added Lady Farley.

"I never know which one hates the most—the men who want to marry your daughter or the men who don't. They both seem tiresome somehow, don't they, Caroline?"

"My dear Constance, all men are more or less tiresome."

"I know," replied Lady Esdaile feelingly; "and so silly about their dinners. Richard says our new cook is 'a woman of one gravy,' and he wants me to speak about it to the housekeeper; but if ever I do speak about things it always ends in unpleasantness, and I'd far rather make Richard angry than one of the servants; so I shan't interfere."

Lady Farley smiled.

"It takes all my courage," continued Lady Esdaile, "to scold my own maid about things that really matter—such as the way she does my hair and puts my clothes on;

and I really have none to spare for dinners, and things like that. But I do wonder if Isabel will be happy. I should think a small house would feel pokey, even with a really nice man like Mr. Seaton. Shouldn't you?"

"Stuffy to a degree, I should imagine. Especially if one knew that one might be reigning as Lady Wrexham at Vernacre instead."

And Lady Farley sighed again; for she had been very proud of Isabel.

CHAPTER X.

Eden.

As a place of residence Eden was closed
When Adam and Eve left home ;
And no one can live there, it is supposed,
For many a year to come.
But now and again, in the summer days,
The gardens are open thrown
That the public may walk down the grassy ways :
And nobody walks alone.

PAUL and Isabel were sitting in Kensington Gardens under the very tree where he asked her if she would be his wife. They now considered this tree their own peculiar property, and felt inclined to prosecute as trespassers any impertinent persons who dared so much as to walk beneath its shadow ; and here was their usual trysting-place in those long and happy afternoons when the year and their engagement were alike young.

"Isn't it dreadful to think how we lived all those years without even having seen each other ?" remarked Paul.

Isabel sighed. "It was a shocking waste of time !"

"And it kept me so ignorant and backward," added Paul ; "I used to think that fine ladies were animated fashion-plates."

"What do you think they are now ?"

"I don't think; I know that they are ideal beings with the airs of Paradise and the graces of Paris."

"I used to think that men were stupid creatures who only cared about dinners and debentures and things of that sort," said Isabel.

"What do you think them now?"

"I know they are intelligent animals with abominable tempers."

Paul laughed. "You are very rude!"

"I know I am. That is because I care for you. I am always rude to the people I really care for."

"That is unwise of you," remarked Paul, "though a not uncommon form of un wisdom. I have often noticed that the people who are ready to die for you, never think it necessary to pass the salt. They seem to imagine that the greater includes the less—which it doesn't."

"The wise people," added Isabel, "are aware that if they only pay you compliments and open your umbrella for you, they will have all the credit of dying for you with none of the expense. They are clever enough to know that, in questions of manners, the less includes the greater—or at any rate infers it."

"Then why are you rude to me, my dear Isabel? You don't seem to live up to your principles."

"I don't. A girl once told me that I should make a bad wife, a good friend, and a simply perfect acquaintance; and I believe she was right."

Paul smiled. "That is hardly a comforting prospect for me, but I mean to risk it nevertheless."

"You see," continued Isabel, who always enjoyed vivisectioning herself, "I am awfully nice to people until I begin to care for them; then I become horrid. It is unfortunate, I admit, but nevertheless it is true."

"As I remarked before, I cannot commend your wisdom," said Paul; "I should pursue a precisely opposite course myself."

"You do," replied Isabel with generosity; "unlike me, you live up to your principles. When first I met you, I thought you rather stiff and difficult to get on with; talking to you was like walking up-hill or rowing up-stream; but now you grow more delightful every day, and more easy to talk to."

Paul looked pleased. "I certainly take more trouble to be nice to you than to anybody else."

"And you succeed beyond your wildest expectations. But I am quite different; as long as I really didn't care for you, I was able to be perfectly charming; I know I was."

"You both were and are," said Paul.

Isabel shook her head. "I know as well as ever the things I ought to say to you to please you, and a year ago I should have said them; but now my own feelings get in the way, and I want to say the things that please me; and so I cease to be charming."

"But, my dear girl, the things that please you please me."

"Oh! no, they don't; you deceive yourself if you think they do. Though less clever than I was before I fell in love, I am still a clever woman, and I know that if I said to you all I want to say I should bore you to death."

"Try me, that's all!" was Paul's terse rejoinder.

"For instance, if I followed my own impulses, I should ask you every hour if you loved me as much as you did the hour before."

"That would be a foolish question; you know I do."

"Then," continued Isabel, "I should ask you if you

liked me as well as other people and things, all of which I should mention separately, till the list was as long and exhaustive as the *Benedicite*."

"That also would be a foolish question; you know I love you more than everything and everybody else put together."

"You see I was right," cried Isabel triumphantly; "my normal conversation, if I gave the rein to it, would bore you."

"No, it wouldn't; you couldn't bore me if you tried; but I own I should consider it somewhat unnecessary."

"I don't believe a man ever could really understand a woman," said Isabel rather sadly.

"Perhaps not, any more than a woman could really understand a man. But I don't see that it matters, as long as they love one another."

Isabel was silent.

"What I don't understand in women is their passion for trying dangerous experiments," continued Paul. "Now, I am ready to suffer any amount of pain, if you could gain any benefit thereby; but I am not ready, I confess, to suffer any amount of pain, for you just to see how I look when I am suffering it."

Isabel tried not to smile, but failed. "Do you know when I am trying experiments on you?" she asked.

"Perfectly; I am not such a fool as you think, and I strongly object to the process. Besides it does as little credit to your eye as to your heart, because I really don't look at all nice when I am cross or unhappy. Now do I?"

"No, my dear Paul, I am bound to own that affliction is most unbecoming to you."

"Then why subject me to it?"

Isabel made another futile attempt not to smile.

"Look here," said her lover, "if you will only say

straight out to me, 'I am going to talk to Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith just to make you jealous,' I shall know what you are driving at; and I will be a very Othello as long as it pleases you. In fact you needn't bring Jones or Smith into the concern at all; just say, 'Paul, I want you to be jealous for half an hour,' and I will entertain the green-eyed monster to any extent."

"How absurd you are!"

"But," continued Paul, "when you suddenly—without any apparent reason—develop an abnormal craving for the society of Jones or Smith, coupled with an equally inexplicable aversion to the sight of me, I cannot for the life of me make out what I have done to offend you; and my days are made wretched and my nights hideous by dreams of suicide and agonies of remorse."

Isabel laughed. "If you are clever enough to see through my little game, why does it make you so miserable?" she asked.

"That is where I am such an ass! Although, by this time, I have learnt the reason of your intermittent attachments to Jones or Smith, nothing but the customs of good society—grafted on to an early religious training—keeps me from punching of heads and shedding of blood every time I see you smile on the brutes."

"You dear man, you really are very nice!"

"So are you, when you don't think that a course of jealousy is necessary to my moral training," added Paul.

"It isn't good for you to have everything your own way," said Isabel reprovingly.

"If you want to see how I look when I am being hurt, tell me so, and I will go and have a tooth out," said Paul pleasantly; "I should much prefer that, to seeing you talk to the sort of idiots you flirt with sometimes."

"You are a very obliging young man!"

"I am. True. this plan can only be carried out thirty-two times, for obvious reasons ; but I daresay we shall think of something else for the thirty-third, if only you will be patient."

"Does it really hurt much when I am nasty to you?" inquired Isabel.

"I should think so. Can't you see that it does?"

"You look rather horrid, Paul, I must say, on those occasions."

"And I feel horrid too. Yet I am a reasonable man, and I can see that you had a right to try this dodge two or three times, just to prove to yourself that I really cared ; but what beats me is why you keep on doing it, when you are as certain that I love you as you are that I am sitting here. It is like vaccinating a baby every week, just to torture the creature."

"Oh! Paul, I don't do it every week ; only once in three weeks at most."

Paul smiled. "Couldn't you make the experiments 'like angels' visits, few and far between'? Say once in six weeks now?"

"You forgive me each time, however often I do it ; I've noticed that."

"Oh! I should forgive you till seventy times seven, but that doesn't make it any the pleasanter for me."

"Poor old boy!" whispered Isabel tenderly.

"By the way," said Paul, "I want you to come with me to see my people. You have not seen them yet, and I want to show them what a prize I have been lucky enough to win. Will you come to Chayford with me next week?"

"Yes, if you want me to. I will do anything you want, Paul, always."

"Then we will go next Tuesday."

"I wonder if your people will like me," mused Isabel.

"Of course they will. How could they—being sane—do otherwise?"

"Suppose they don't like me," persisted Isabel.

"Then I shall quarrel with them; but they will, I am sure of it."

"How sure you always are of everything, Paul!"

"Am I?"

"Yes; you are so strong, you always do what you mean to do, and other people always do what you wish."

Paul shook his head. "I have meant to do two things in my life, and I have only done one of them. Fifty per cent. is not such an enormous success after all."

"What were the two things?" asked Isabel.

"I meant to take a First at Oxford, and I meant to make you love me."

"But it wasn't your own fault that you couldn't take a First; at least it would have been your fault if you had done so, instead of helping your people. It was splendid of you to give up your ambition for them!"

"Thank you, dear," said Paul. "Still, the fact remains that I did not do what I meant to do; which shows that there is a stronger Power than one's own will after all. I used to think that success or failure lay in the hollow of one's hand; and now I am beginning to see that the best of us can do nothing but 'rough-hew'. But when I was young I made up my mind to shape my own ends for myself."

"And now?"

"As regards the two things that I wanted most, Divinity shaped the one and it is left to you to shape the other; so I am not such a very independent fellow after all."

"I hope I shall shape my part all right," said Isabel softly.

Paul looked grave. "It will go hard with me if you don't, Isabel."

There was great excitement at Chayford over the news of Paul's engagement. Mrs. Martin had always hated Paul for fear he should wish to marry Alice; but she hated him still more for not having wished it, and she hated Isabel most of all for having come between Alice and the thing which was considered most undesirable for her.

"I trust that this engagement will turn out for Paul's real welfare," she said to Paul's mother one day; "but I have my doubts, as Miss Carnaby is evidently a thoroughly worldly person, and so will probably be very extravagant."

"Paul is so devoted to Miss Carnaby that I feel no doubt about her making him happy," replied Paul's mother cheerfully; "and I am sure she must be really nice and good, or else Paul would not be so fond of her."

Mrs. Martin shook her head. "Beauty and rank are minor matters, and have, I fear, proved more attractive to Paul than more solid charms."

"Miss Carnaby is not beautiful, however," suggested Mrs. Seaton; "though Paul says her aunt, Lady Farley, is."

Mrs. Martin pricked up her ears at the title. "Is her aunt called Lady Farley, did you say? Dear me, how very interesting! What Farleys are they?"

"Sir Benjamin Farley is a G.C.B., I believe, and had an Indian governorship for a time."

"I know the name; I have often seen it in the papers; but I had no idea that Sir Benjamin was a prospective relative of dear Paul's. I hope, Mrs. Seaton, that should

Lady Farley ever visit you, you will do your old friend the honour of asking me to meet her."

"I do not expect Lady Farley ever will visit me," said the minister's wife rather stiffly.

"Still if she did, dear friend, it would be such a delight to me to meet her. And such an advantage, too; for talking with those interesting and distinguished public characters is an education in itself, I consider."

Although Mrs. Seaton fully recognized the necessity for education on Mrs. Martin's part, she did not feel herself called upon to supply the need; so she merely said: "Paul and Miss Carnaby are coming to stay with us next week".

"Indeed; how very delightful! I hope that you will bring the dear young lady frequently to see us while she is with you. She will doubtless feel much more at home in a house like The Cedars than in a small cottage such as this."

"Paul's wife will have to make herself at home among Paul's people," said Mrs. Seaton quietly.

"But think of the discomfort," persisted Mrs. Martin with her usual tact and refinement of feeling, "to a person accustomed to a large establishment! Don't you think it would be better if Miss Carnaby stayed at The Cedars altogether? Mr. Martin and I should be very pleased to entertain her, and she would be a nice friend for Alice." And visions of Alice's entry into society, by the door of Isabel, floated through Mrs. Martin's mind.

"It is very kind of you, but I am sure Paul would prefer Miss Carnaby to stay with us. You see, if she is a lady, she will think no worse of us for having a small house and living quietly; and if she is not, Paul had better find it out before it is too late."

But Mrs. Martin still looked doubtful. "It will be a

great change from what she is accustomed to, and I can not help feeling that the dear young lady would be more at home with us."

The minister's wife could hardly restrain a smile as she recalled a sentence in her son's last letter, which said: "Whatever you do, keep those awful Martins out of the way; their blatant vulgarity would make Isabel positively ill, and I don't want her to be exposed to it". But she wisely kept the humour of the situation to herself, and held her peace.

"I suppose you will dine late while Miss Carnaby is with you," persisted Mrs. Martin: "an early dinner is considered extremely vulgar by well-bred people, I can assure you."

Mrs. Seaton looked surprised. "Certainly not; why should we? I cannot see anything vulgar in the time of one's dinner—it is merely a matter of household convenience. But I think it would be extremely vulgar to alter our habits so as to make our visitor imagine that we were in any way different from what we are. Nothing is really vulgar save pretence; and that is always vulgar, in whatever rank of society it is found."

"Ah! dear Mrs. Seaton, you are too unworldly. Believe me, it is the small things that you despise—such as late dinners and plenty of servants and proper evening-dresses—that make the difference between gentlepeople and others."

"Do you think so? I had an idea that the difference lay in quite another direction."

"Then you were mistaken," replied Mrs. Martin. "I am extremely sensitive to such things myself, and I assure you I should not feel that I was a lady if I dined before seven o'clock, and did not dress for dinner. It is in these trifles that good breeding is really shown. Mr.

Martin laughs at me; but I tell him I could not digest my dinner if I did not wear a low dress and a flower in my hair—even if it were only a chrysanthemum.”

For the first time in her life Mrs. Seaton felt that her sense of humour ran on the same lines as Mr. Martin's; but she did not point out this similarity to his wife. She merely preserved the chrysanthemum in her memory, to regale Paul and Joanna with at some future time.

But there was no one in Chayford more deeply interested in Paul's love-affair than Martha.

“Well, to be sure, Miss Joanna,” she said one day; “it seems only yesterday that I whipped Master Paul for flying into a passion and kicking Mrs. Martin's cook, because she passed the remark that you were the ugliest little girl she'd ever set eyes on; and now he is old enough to be taking to himself a wife. Time does fly, and no mistake!”

Joanna sighed. She was a good woman, and unselfish, but it is “a bitter thing to look into happiness through another man's eyes”. “Isabel Carnaby is a lucky girl,” she remarked; “for I am sure Paul is a man who will make any woman happy.”

Martha shook her head. “Don't be too sure of anything about a man, miss—not even if it is our Paul. They are queer creatures, even the best of them!”

“You are always hard on men, Martha.”

“So I am, miss, they are such wild, feckless folks. First in a tantrum about one thing, and then about another, till there is no pleasing them; and they are no use—and far less ornament—as far as I can see.”

“You don't understand how to manage them, I am afraid,” laughed Joanna.

“Not I, my dear. The Lord Who made them may understand them, but I don't; for if I'd had the making

of them, they'd have been made after a different pattern, I can tell you."

"But you must not say all this to Miss Carnaby," warned the wise Joanna.

"Of course not, miss; I know well enough what to say to folks that are courting. Now there was my niece, Eunice Tozer; she got engaged to a young man in her father's shop—and a sore disappointment it was to them all, herself included, that she hadn't done better."

"I hope you didn't say so to her, Martha."

"Not I, my dear! She came complaining to me that it was but a poor settling for her, but I soon cheered her up. 'Eunice,' says I, 'with such a plain face as yours it is a wonder you've got a husband at all—let alone the sort; and you ought to be thankful, instead of finding fault.' That was the way to look at the matter, to my thinking, and I soon made Eunice see it in the same light."

"Was Eunice happy when she was married?" Joanna asked.

"As happy as any woman could be with a man tied to her for the rest of her days; but, as you know, I don't hold with the men, miss. They are troublesome creatures, especially all of them."

"They are indeed," exclaimed Joanna with amusement.

"You see, miss, my mother always said that the troubles which came direct from the Lord, she could bear without murmuring; but the troubles which came from father's stupidity were a different thing, and she hadn't common patience with them. Many a time has she passed the remark that, if a woman has got a husband, she spends all her life in bearing for him the con-

sequences of the things she particularly told him not to do."

Joanna nodded. "That must really be very irritating! It would try me more than anything."

"And me too, miss. There is nothing like a man for trying the temper. Mark my word, it is because there is no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven that the temper of an angel is the temper of an angel. If the angels had got husbands, there'd be a different tale about their tempers, I'll be bound!"

CHAPTER XI.

His Own People.

Where thou goest I will go,
Through the sunshine or the snow:
Where thou dwellest I will dwell,
In a court or in a cell:
All thy people mine shall be,
Since myself is one with thee.

IT was the day of Isabel's arrival at Chayford, and Mrs. Seaton's face was pink with excitement and anxiety that everything should be as Paul wished for Paul's bride-elect. The tea-table was spread with every simple dainty that Martha could suggest and carry out; and was covered with Mrs. Seaton's best table-cloth—a specimen of the finest and most silky-looking damask, with an elegant border composed of arum lilies, and an effigy of John Wesley in the centre.

"I cannot help feeling a little nervous," said Mrs. Seaton; "I am so anxious that everything should be as Paul would like."

The minister smiled. "My dear, you are careful and troubled about many things. If Isabel Carnaby loves our Paul, as I believe she does, she will not notice what viands are spread out before her, nor what servants are ready to serve her. She will be so happy to feel herself in Paul's presence, that minor matters will be of no moment to her."

"But I do want everything to be nice," persisted Mrs. Seaton plaintively.

"Don't worry so, mother," chimed in the sensible Joanna; "we have done our best to prepare a warm welcome for Isabel; and if she isn't pleased, it is her fault and not ours."

"But it is Paul I am thinking of—not Isabel," said Mrs. Seaton; "I should be so sorry to disappoint him in any way."

"My love, you really are overburdened with the cares of this life," replied her husband; "believe me, it is really of no importance what we eat and how we are clothed, provided we have wholesome food and garments beseeming our estate; and it grieves me to see you wearing yourself out about things that do not signify."

"Well, I hope Paul will be satisfied," repeated Paul's mother.

"There they are!" exclaimed Joanna, as a cab drove up to the door, and Paul sprang out, followed by an extremely well-dressed young lady.

The minister and his family went into the hall to receive their visitor; and Mrs. Seaton trembled all over, for she felt it was an ordeal. So did Paul; and his mother knew that he did, as soon as she saw his face.

"Mother, this is Isabel," was all he could say; he was so dreadfully afraid that the two women he loved best in the world would not say the right things to one another.

But Isabel was equal to the occasion. She threw her arms round Mrs. Seaton's neck and kissed her.

"I want you to be a mother to me as well as to Paul," she whispered. "I haven't got a mother of my own, you know, and I do so want one."

And then and there the minister's wife took Isabel

into her motherly heart, and never really let her out again, in spite of all that happened afterwards.

When Isabel had duly greeted Mr. Seaton and Joanna, she was introduced to Martha.

"This is our faithful friend, Martha," said Mrs. Seaton; "she nursed Paul when he was a little boy."

Isabel held out her hand with a radiant smile. "I must thank you for taking so much care of him for me," she said; "if you hadn't sown, I should not have reaped, so I owe much of my happiness to you."

"Don't mention it, miss," replied Martha, looking proud and joyful; "it was always a pleasure to do things for Master Paul, in spite of his temper, which I am bound to say was one of the hottest I ever came across, while he was as yet a child of nature and not of grace. I bore the marks of his dear little teeth in my arm for many a day, miss, for once contradicting him when he said that Abraham was the father of Joseph, bless his heart!"

Isabel laughed, and so did Paul.

"But don't let me discourage you, miss, if you've made up your mind to get married," added Martha, fearing that she had said too much; "if you must have a husband, perhaps Master Paul is the best sort you'll get; though bad's the best, to my thinking, with regard to husbands."

Tea that evening was a very cheerful meal at Chayford Cottage. Isabel was so charmed by the refinement and culture of Paul's home, that she was at her best. She found herself in an atmosphere of intellectual activity such as she was accustomed to, but combined with a simplicity of life and a familiarity with higher things such as she had never yet known; and the combination was very attractive to her.

"I shall have much to ask about your life in India, my dear," said Mr. Seaton to Isabel, as they all sat round the tea-table; "I have always longed to go there, and see for myself the remains of one of the world's oldest and most picturesque civilizations, but I shall never accomplish it now; so I must beg you to give me information second-hand."

"Martha is immensely impressed by your having lived in India," exclaimed Joanna; "but she has deliciously vague ideas about the place. I think she pictures it to herself as a 'coral strand' covered with undressed niggers, like the picture on the cover of the *Missionary Notices*."

"I am not sure that my ideas of India are not a good deal like that," Paul said; "only I add a few elephants and pagodas."

"She asked me the other day," continued Joanna, still addressing Isabel, "if I thought you had ever worshipped idols while you were in India."

Isabel sighed. "I am afraid I sometimes did; but they were not the native ones."

"Never mind, my dear," said Mrs. Seaton kindly; "we have all of us worshipped idols at some time or another—except, of course, the minister."

Her husband shook his head. "I am afraid, my love, that I have worshipped idols too; only I bound them in vellum and called them by theological names."

"I expect we have all got a little museum of cast-off idols somewhere in our hearts," remarked Isabel.

"Which we now and then dust and put in order," added Joanna.

"Although they are no longer used as idols, they are still interesting as curiosities," said Paul. "I've got three fine ones in mine, called rowing and success and

power; and I dare not allow myself to take them out and dust them too often, for fear I should fall a-worshipping of them once more."

"Dear old Paul!" said his mother tenderly.

"I used to have two lovely ones called the world and fashion," said Isabel; "but Paul came by and knocked them over in passing, and I have never been able to set them up again."

"I have got a very bothering one named duty," said Joanna; "and it gives me a lot of trouble, because I am not quite sure whether it is an idol or not. Sometimes I think it is, and then I put it by in the museum; but at other times it seems to be a legitimate object of adoration, and then I have to restore it to its shrine. I never can decide where to keep the thing for two days together."

"That would worry me," remarked Isabel; "there is nothing so wearing as indecision."

"But you are very undecided, Isabel," argued Paul.

"I know I am, and that is why I reprove this characteristic in other people. I feel sure I shall become an old woman before my time, through suffering agonies of indecision as to whether I shall take my waterproof to church or not, and how often I shall write to you in a week."

"What idols are in your museum, mother?" inquired Joanna.

"Oh! my dear, when a woman is married there is no room in her heart for anything but God and her husband and her children; and then she has to be very careful lest her husband and her children should take up more than their share of room."

Mr Seaton smiled. "I do not think you need be afraid, Ruth; for I believe that the more room we give in

our hearts to our fellow-creatures, the more room there is left for God."

"Paul will have to show you all about Chayford tomorrow," said Mrs. Seaton, turning to Isabel; "it is a pretty old town, and the surrounding country is lovely. Are you a good walker, my dear?"

"I am as fond of walking as I am of talking, Mrs. Seaton, which is saying a great deal; in fact, I may confess I am as walkative as I am talkative; *walkative* is rather a good word, I think. I've just invented it."

"It is capital," agreed Paul.

"Paul has told me about the people here," added Isabel; "I already know them all by their names. I am sure I could pass an examination in Chayford, and take honours."

"It will be fun to show you all the neighbours," exclaimed Joanna, "and to see if they are like what you expect!"

"How is Mrs. Martin?" asked Isabel.

"Better than ever!" was Joanna's reply; "she is torn asunder between her social respect for, and her spiritual disapproval of, you. But she reconciles you to herself by measuring your position in this world and your prospects in the next by different measures—like troy weight and avoirdupois—so that the two do not clash."

"How very nice of her!" exclaimed Isabel with delight.

"She offended Martha dreadfully the last time she called here," continued Joanna, "by saying that our cat's tail is too short for a real Persian. Martha related it to me afterwards with great indignation, and added: 'As if the Lord didn't know how to make a cat without Mrs. Martin's interference!'"

Everybody laughed; then Isabel said: "Martha is a

dear! Even in this present world, 'I shall desire more love and knowledge of her'."

"She repays research," remarked Paul, "though I confess I think she would be more agreeable if her conscience were not so bent on setting forth unflattering truths. I do not ask for lies; but even truth requires clothing."

"Besides it is not always necessary to say the whole truth about everything," said Mrs. Seaton; "it is wrong to utter falsehood, but it is not wrong to keep silence."

"You mean that if a person had good eyes and an ugly mouth, you would tell her how pretty her eyes were, and leave her mouth to speak for itself?" suggested Isabel.

Mrs. Seaton looked amused.

"That would be mother's plan," said Joanna; "she never says anything that could hurt anybody's feelings. And I believe that, as a matter of fact, she would only look at the eyes, and never notice that the mouth was ugly. She has a splendid habit of only seeing the good in people and things."

"That is quite true," agreed the minister.

Joanna continued: "I am sorry to say that unpleasant truths are a terrible temptation to me. I really don't mean to be disagreeable, but sometimes they fly out of my mouth before I have time to stop them. Miss Dallicot asked me yesterday if I liked her new bonnet, and I'd said 'No' before I had time to weigh my words. I was extremely sorry afterwards, she looked so hurt."

"My child," said Mr. Seaton, "you should consider other people's feelings, and strive never to give pain where it can be avoided."

"So I do, father; but now and then the truth is too strong for me. And I am sure that a glimpse of the

bonnet itself will prove to you that I was not without provocation."

"What was it like?" asked Isabel.

"It was a ghastly combination of black and white feathers and red flowers," replied Joanna; "and resembled a young person's funeral passing through a field of poppies; it really was a weird sight!"

"Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not," said Mr. Seaton reprovingly; "and Miss Dallicot is a dear and valued friend of mine."

"I am not forsaking her, father; I am only describing her head-gear."

Mr. Seaton smiled as he shook his head. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and ridicule and friendliness hardly seem to me compatible, my child."

"Wait till you see the bonnet," persisted Joanna.

"I, for one, am looking forward to the vision," exclaimed Paul. "When she comes into chapel on Sunday, I shall begin to sing 'The morning flowers display their sweets'."

"Did I tell you that she tumbled down coming into chapel last Sunday?" said Joanna.

"No—did she? I wish I'd been there to see," cried the unregenerate Paul.

"Yes; she caught her foot on the mat of the door, staggered up the aisle with increasing speed at every step, and finally fell—an inert mass—at the pulpit steps, while her parasol and pocket-handkerchief and hymn-book flew all over the chapel like leaves in autumn."

Paul and Isabel laughed heartily; then the latter said: "My aunt had a similar misadventure the other day. She sneaked into a shop in Regent Street to inquire the price of a carpet she had no intention of buying—a mean trick, as I told her, and her sin found her out."

"Why, what happened?" asked Paul.

"She, likewise, tripped on entering, and ran a wild and reckless race the whole length of the shop. Brave young men sprang over the counter to stop her mad career, and even the cashier rushed out of his little square pew to check her rapid flight; but all in vain. She outstripped them all, and lay at last—convulsed with laughter—at the foot of a mirror at the very far end of the shop."

Mrs. Seaton laughed till the tears ran down her face. "It really seems too bad to laugh at such things, but I never can help it; I hope Lady Farley was not hurt."

"Not in the least. But you can picture her shame and humiliation when she had to confess to the crowd of young men collected to pick up her remains, that she had only looked in to inquire the price of a carpet!"

"It was rather dreadful for her!" agreed Mrs. Seaton, still simmering with amusement.

"I wish Mrs. Martin did not sit just before me in chapel!" sighed Joanna.

"Why not?" asked Paul.

"Because there is one white tacking-thread left to sully the glory of her otherwise immaculate Sunday mantle; and that tacking-thread comes between me and my devotions. I am torn between the desire to stretch forth my hand and pluck it out, and my knowledge that Mrs. Martin's tacking-threads are no concern of mine."

"You should try not to look at it, my dear," said Mrs. Seaton.

"So I do, mother; but the thing rises up and hits me in the face, so to speak; it is like Gehazi in its unnatural whiteness."

"I should let it stand," said Paul, "as an everlasting testimony to the truth that even Mrs. Martin is human,

and not beyond the help of tacking-threads. To my mind there is something infinitely pathetic and poetical in the idea. I feel I could write a poem on it, if not a tract."

"I know I shall tell her about it some day," remarked Joanna.

"I'm awfully interested in your passion for speaking the truth," said Isabel; "it is just the other way with me; I always want to say what I feel people want me to say, rather than what I really think."

"How funny! But that is because it is your nature to make yourself pleasant. It is fearfully difficult for me not to make myself disagreeable—while to make myself agreeable is impossible," replied Joanna.

"Poor Joanna," said her mother.

Joanna went on: "I know that people often blame me for saying disagreeable things; but if they only knew how many disagreeable things I keep myself from saying, and how deeply I regret those I do say, they would commend rather than condemn me".

Then Mr. Seaton questioned Isabel about her life abroad, and the conversation never flagged till it was time for Joanna to go to class, and for Paul and Isabel to start for a walk in the lanes round Chayford Cottage.

Isabel's week at Chayford was a great success. The Seatons were charmed with her, and she with them; and as she and Paul had nothing in the world to do but to make love to each other, there was no occasion for jealousies or misunderstandings between them such as came later in the conflicting interests of "a London June".

Isabel revered Paul's father, because he was so courteous and so saintly, and had read more than any man she had ever met; she liked Joanna, because Joanna

was good and clever, and possessed a most admirable sense of humour; and she loved Mrs. Seaton, because the minister's wife was the first woman she had ever met who in some degree satisfied the mother-hunger in her heart. And Mrs. Seaton understood Isabel better than any of them did—not excluding even Paul. She knew that there were depths in the girl's soul, whereof Joanna did not dream, and which Paul had not yet sounded; and that—in spite of her sunny light-heartedness—Isabel's nature was very highly strung. Mrs. Seaton trembled for them both when she realized that Paul's masterly touch might prove a little too heavy for so delicate an instrument, and that some of the strings might break under the pressure. But she knew herself powerless to interfere; for she had learnt that what we call influence, other people often call impertinence, and that it is a power which is more prone to do harm than good. When people are seized with the desire to set about improving their neighbours, it is a phase of thought which might be described as the “negative” of the missionary spirit; that it to say, it is a form of spiritual instruction which has the effect of turning Christians into savages—for the time being, at any rate.

The only person at Chayford that Isabel did not get on with was Mrs. Martin. These two fell foul of each other from the first. Mrs. Martin began by being obsequious, and Isabel snubbed her; and the man or woman who can forgive a social slight is as yet an undiscovered product of civilization. Human nature can only stand a certain strain; and social rudeness stretches this elasticity to its uttermost limit, if not beyond it.

Mrs. Martin opened the ball by calling upon Isabel, decked out in her Sunday best.

“I am so glad to meet you, my dear Miss Carnaby,”

she began, addressing herself pointedly to Isabel, and coolly excluding Mrs. Seaton and Joanna from the conversation; "I feel sure we shall be friends, for your dear aunt's sake. I believe she is one of the Farleys of Ferngrove, and they were friends of my mother's years ago."

"I am afraid I must confess I never heard of the Farleys of Ferngrove," said Isabel rather stiffly.

"Did you not? dear me, how strange! They were an old county family in Lancashire when my dear mother was a girl—really quite a good old family, I can assure you—and she had the pleasure of meeting them once or twice in those happy old days. I really think your distinguished uncle must belong to the same family. They were most accomplished and extremely rich."

"I don't think so," said Isabel. "Uncle Benjamin's money came to him from his mother's brother, who was in the iron trade; his father was a clergyman, and was extremely poor."

Mrs. Martin looked shocked; to her mind there was something indelicate in the mere mention of poverty. Her father had been extremely poor at the commencement of his commercial career, but she would have died rather than mention so disgraceful a fact. She wondered that Miss Carnaby had not more refinement of feeling. Nevertheless she made another attempt to establish a friendly footing between herself and this coarse-minded young woman.

"I wonder if you ever met my dear friends, the Sedleys?" she said.

Isabel did not think so.

"They are charming people, dear Miss Carnaby, and have such aristocratic connections; only last year they were staying in the same hotel as the Hereditary Grand Duchess of Edelweiss, somewhere in Switzerland; I

forget the name of the place, but I know it was most fashionable. The Sedleys never go to any but really fashionable resorts."

"How very interesting," murmured Isabel politely.

"You would delight in Mrs. Sedley, she is so extremely refined. She once told me that unless she always wore silk next her skin, she would die of irritation. Is it not strange how good-breeding shows itself in these small trifles?"

"Very strange," said Isabel.

"You would hardly believe it, Miss Carnaby, but do you know I am physically unable to wear cheap boots or gloves myself? If I attempted to do so, I should become lame and helpless at once. I said to my dear husband only yesterday, it is not that I wish to be extravagant, for I hold extravagance a sin; but my skin is so delicate that the wear of cheap things is simply torture to me."

"I am sorry for you," replied Isabel, "for the pleasure of the summer sales must be lost upon you. You cannot imagine how delightful they are! Lady Farley and I always attend them; and last season we took Lady Eleanor Gregory with us, and she revelled in the bargains even more than we did."

"Dear me!" was all that Mrs. Martin could ejaculate.

"I remember," continued Isabel, "that she bought a sealskin cape, because they were so reduced; and she nearly died of heat in trying it on, for it was the hottest day of a very hot July. We were too warm in muslin blouses, and we sat laughing at poor Lady Eleanor as she tried on cape after cape, each one heavier than the last."

"Poor young lady!" remarked Mrs. Martin sympathetically; "I trust that thus overheating herself did

not result in a chill. I remember a friend of mine, Mrs. Albert Simpkinson, died from the effects of a chill, brought on by overclothing herself on a warm day; and her premature decease was peculiarly unfortunate, for she died just as she was beginning to get into good society."

Isabel's eyes twinkled wickedly, but she kept her lips in order, and did not allow them to relax into a smile. "How sad!" she murmured.

"It was indeed!" sighed Mrs. Martin; "only a fortnight before Mrs. Simpkinson's death, the Honourable Mrs. Avalon, daughter-in-law to the Earl of Glastonbury, called upon her; and she barely had time to return the call—much less to follow up the intimacy—before she died."

But though Isabel did not get on with Mrs. Martin she looked at everybody else in Chayford through rose-coloured glasses. To Martha she was specially gracious, and was described by that excellent woman as "a sweet young creature".

"Master Paul is a lucky man, and no mistake!" said Martha one day; "luck being only another name for a good strong will of your own, coupled with the help of Providence, as my brother James said when he induced Mr. Hickory to leave the Grampton circuit."

"Who was Mr. Hickory?" inquired Isabel, who always appreciated Martha when the latter became retrospective.

"Mr. Hickory was a young minister with new-fangled notions, who travelled in Grampton for one year, and then my brother James induced him to leave."

"Didn't your brother like his preaching?" asked Joanna.

"Not at all, miss, not at all; but it wasn't only his

preaching that James objected to, though that was far from satisfactory, being more full of modern science (falsely so called) than of saving truth. James never liked Mr. Hickory's views on the devil—he thought them broad and dangerous—but it was not the devil that they quarrelled over after all; it was the heating apparatus in Grampton Chapel. James said he'd have overlooked the devil if Mr. Hickory had given way about the heating apparatus, as we must all give and take in this world; but Mr. Hickory's attitude in that matter was more than he could or would stand."

Isabel looked deeply interested, and so did Joanna. "What was the end of it?" asked the former.

"Well, miss, you see, James said that the old heating apparatus had been good enough for the congregation for twenty years and more, and if it was good enough for them it was good enough for Mr. Hickory, and it shouldn't be altered as long as he was chapel-steward. But the minister was set on having some new-fangled arrangement of his own. And the minister got his own way, James was overruled, and the new apparatus was set up in Grampton Chapel."

"Was it a success?"

"A success, Miss Carnaby! Who ever heard of an improvement of any kind being a success? I never did. Give me the old-fashioned things, say I, and don't meddle with them; for I never yet met with an improvement that wasn't for the worse."

"You are a consistent Conservative, Martha, and I admire you," laughed Isabel.

"Thank you, miss; I don't go in for politics and all that rubbish, but I keep my eyes open and see things for myself, and judge accordingly."

"And a very wise plan!" agreed Isabel.

"That is as may be, miss."

"But how about the new heating apparatus and your brother James?" suggested Joanna.

"Well, miss, James never could say if it was a judgment from heaven or whether it was because the chapel-keeper put too much coal on; but anyhow the whole thing caught fire, and burnt part of the wall before it could be put out"

"Was much of the wall burnt?" asked Isabel.

"A nice piece, miss."

Joanna smiled. "Was that why the minister left?"

"Well, miss, after that, Mr. Hickory saw that he had made a mistake; and my brother James advised him to leave Grampton and begin again elsewhere. Before he went, James told him he would do well if he set about helping folks to get new hearts, and left their old heating apparatuses alone. Which was good advice, to my thinking, though it was my own brother as gave it."

The happy days at Chayford passed all too quickly. When Sunday came, Isabel went with Paul to hear his father preach; and she never forgot her first service in Chayford Chapel. She possessed the artistic temperament to an unusual extent, and therefore beauty in worship strongly appealed to her, whether it were shown in ornate ritual or in extreme simplicity. To such natures as hers a stately cathedral filled with the voice of a great multitude, and a bleak hillside where a handful of persecuted Covenanters are assembled, seem alike the house of God and the gate of heaven; for the artist-soul is slow to discern the theological differences of the two or three gathered together, but is quick to perceive and to prostrate itself before the perfect beauty of the One in the midst of them.

Isabel Carnaby was an extremely emotional woman,

and consequently experienced the quick vision of the truth, and the rapid clouding over of the same, which are the portion of all emotional temperaments.

As she sat beside Paul in Chayford Chapel that Sunday morning she was at her best. Her love for him stimulated the religious, and stifled the worldly, side of her character. Herein lay the fundamental difference between herself and Joanna : Joanna was a good woman because she loved God ; Isabel was a good woman because she loved a good man—a lower type, perhaps, from a spiritual point of view, but one none the less to be considered, since the vessels in a great house are not all of equal honour, and the stars in the firmament are not all of the same glory.

The minister preached a beautiful sermon on Love as the fulfilling of the Law ; and as Isabel listened, her soul was uplifted and her understanding quickened. She made up her mind that, however she might fail in other things, the forgiveness accorded to them that love much should always be her right ; and that she would never allow clouds of doubt and misunderstanding to arise between her and those whom it was her duty to love and to cherish. Them, she vowed, she would love to the end—and all others for their sakes. It seemed to Isabel an easy thing, sitting in the quaint little chapel and listening to the minister's silvery voice, to love both the brother whom she had seen and the God Whom she had not seen ; but many things look easy from the Mount of Transfiguration which grow difficult—if not impossible—amid the rabble of Jerusalem.

The hymn after the sermon was, "There is a land of pure delight," and it thrilled Isabel through and through. As she and Paul sang it together, she felt that for them the "everlasting spring" had already begun and the

"never-withering flowers" were theirs, because they loved each other.

So Paul and Isabel rested for a while upon the Delectable Mountains, and imagined that they were even now in Paradise. But they forgot how it is written that "a little below these mountains on the left hand, lieth the country of Conceit, from which country there comes into the way in which the pilgrims walked a little crooked lane".

John Bunyan knew what he was talking about when he described the country of Conceit as lying close under the shadow of the Delectable Mountains.

CHAPTER XII.

A Feast of Good Things.

They talked of things created long,
And things but lately come to pass,
Down from the Swan of Avon's song
To sounds evolved from glass.

WITH the exception of the Seatons, there was no one at Chayford that Isabel Carnaby liked so well as the Fords; for she felt—as most people did who were brought under the spell of its influence—the fascination of Chayford House. It was a most attractive home, with its huge stone gateway in front, forming the full-stop to Chayford High Street; and its beautiful park at the back, studded with fine old elms and sloping down to the river. And not the least picturesque feature in one of the prettiest parks in Mershire was Chayford Cottage, nestling among the trees, and covered with purple clematis and scarlet virginia-creeper in their season. Chayford House was equally interesting within and without; it was one of the delightful houses where the drawing-room is merely an *édition de luxe* of the library; and, when all is said and done, there is no drawing-room paper as effective as vellum and half-calf.

Michael Ford had been, as the Irishman said, a rich man for several generations; and his home bore the hall-mark of a century's refinement and luxury. He had all the

geniality of a man who has never had a misunderstanding—much less a fight—with circumstances; and there was not a grain of bitterness in his composition. He was a Wesleyan, as his fathers had been before him; but he gave as generously to the Anglicans and the Independents in Chayford as he gave to his own Church—and his gifts to all were munificent. He was sensible rather than scholarly, and wise rather than learned. In politics he was a Whig of the old school; and the only disappointment of his otherwise successful life was that he had been compelled by business engagements to abandon his cherished desire for a parliamentary career. But he intended this for his son in his place; and the object of his ambition was to see Edgar member for Chayford on the Liberal side.

Edgar's character, inherited from some far-off Puritan ancestor, was incomprehensible to his father; but Mr. Ford shared the common and comfortable parental delusion that the perfect acquiescence of children in their parents' views is merely a question of time.

It was strange that while Mark Seaton's son made an idol of success, Michael Ford's son made a Moloch of conscience; yet Mark Seaton's affections were set entirely on things above, and Michael Ford possessed common-sense to a degree which almost raised it to the level of genius. But these things happen.

During Isabel's week at Chayford she saw a great deal of Edgar. He understood her better than Paul did, and therefore he did not fall in love with her. Mutual comprehension makes for friendship, and militates against love; for love—like modern society papers—must have a "puzzle column" for the mystification of those that take it in. Isabel's emotional temperament was nearer akin to Edgar's mysticism than to Paul's dogged deter-

mination; so she and Edgar became good friends, and there was no element of danger in their friendship.

It was characteristic of Edgar that in the days when he believed that Paul loved Alice, his conscience forbade him to speak to the girl, because he wanted to do so; but in the days when Paul loved Isabel, Edgar talked to her freely, simply because such conversation gave him no particular pleasure. To make himself miserable was an irresistible temptation to Edgar Ford.

On the eve of Isabel's return to town, there was a small dinner-party at Chayford House. In addition to the four Seatons and their guest, the company included the Reverend Henry Stoneley, Rector of Chayford, and his popular wife; Mr. Madderley (an artist who was painting Mrs. Ford's portrait), and Alice Martin.

After the migration into the dining-room, Mr. Ford began :

"Does any one know the result of the Sidbury election?"

"I have heard nothing authentic," replied the rector; "but I have good reasons for believing that the Conservative has been returned."

"That is what I expected," exclaimed his host; "the Liberals there are divided into two camps with two separate leaders, namely the regular Liberal and a Labour candidate; and if our people will persist in thus splitting up their forces, your people are always bound to get in."

"That is quite true," said Mrs. Ford; "Conservatives have learnt the lesson of obedience to their leaders."

"Have you ever noticed," remarked Isabel Carnaby, "that, when it comes to the point, a Conservative will vote for the worst Conservative rather than for the best Liberal; while a Liberal will rather not vote at all than

support a candidate who does not share his every prejudice?"

Mr. Stoneley smiled. "Our people certainly know how to pull together."

"And our people don't," added Mr. Ford; "that is the weakness of the Liberal party; each individual is too fond of thinking out things for himself, and judging from his own limited observation, rather than from the experience of wiser men."

"I beg your pardon, father," said Edgar, "but I should call that the strength of the Liberal party. Surely conscientious and reasonable support is better than blind and unreasoning obedience."

"More gratifying to the individual perhaps," replied his father, "but disastrous to the party."

"Moreover," added the rector, "it does not do for every man to be a law unto himself. Liberty carried too far degenerates into anarchy."

"If every man does what is right in his own eyes, what becomes of law and order?" suggested Mr. Seaton. "Strength is shown by self-suppression rather than by self-glorification."

"Precisely," agreed the rector. "The whole crux of civilization seems to me to lie in the fact that the savage does what is best for himself, and the civilized man what is best for the community at large."

"And government is but a great mutual insurance society against human selfishness," added Mr. Seaton.

"I quite agree with that," said Mrs. Ford; "the suppression of self is the end and aim of civilization as well as of Christianity."

"Just so, my dear madam, just so. Nevertheless I should not say that Conservatives do not think out matters for themselves," objected the rector; "for they do."

"Oh! don't say that," cried Isabel; "do not, at one fell swoop, take away the one virtue of the Conservative party."

The rector smiled. "Loyal old Tory as I am, I should not wish to recommend my party to alien eyes by assuming virtues when it has them not, my dear young lady."

"But," persisted Edgar, "I never can understand why what is wrong for an individual can be right for a party or a State."

"That is beside the mark," interpolated Mr. Ford.

Edgar looked puzzled. Things were always so clear to his father, and they were hardly ever clear to him. He groped after the truth, but he often failed to grasp it.

"Obedience is right in all men," said Mr. Seaton, "whether they be taken as individuals or as communities. To submit to authority is one of man's highest and most important duties."

"Quite so, quite so," agreed the rector; "yet now-a-days people are in sad danger of forgetting this."

"Do you think so?" said Paul Seaton. "For my part I consider that the modern enthusiasm for games and athletics of all kinds is a powerful antidote to individualism and faddism and their attendant follies. Therefore, if I had my way, I would insist on every man's taking up a game of some kind, and becoming proficient in it."

"And a very good plan," cried the rector heartily; "a very good plan, indeed!"

"You see," continued Paul, "as long as England had to fight for her existence among the nations, there was no talk about each particular Englishman's special prejudices and crotchets; this is one of the evils following in the train of peace and plenty. But by teaching our

boys to go in for games, we in a measure obviate this. A man who is good at rowing or cricket or football has had to some extent a soldier's training, and so will probably possess a soldier's virtues."

"My son," said Mr. Seaton, "never say a word in favour of war. It is an invention of the devil, and no good can ever come of it."

"Still, good has come of it," persisted Paul; "the full-grown sons of a warlike State are neither women nor children—they are essentially manly."

"Our idea of manliness is not the true one," said Mr. Seaton; "physical courage has done so much for man that it has won undue admiration from both barbarism and civilization. Yet it is but a savage's virtue at the best."

"That is quite true!" exclaimed Edgar Ford.

Mr. Seaton continued: "My son has just pointed out that war makes men the very opposite of women and children. There I agree with him. But I cannot forget that it is written: 'Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'."

"War is a terrible thing!" sighed Mrs. Ford; "I never can understand how Wordsworth could write a poem in favour of it."

"I expect he was sick of behaving prettily, and writing about primroses and pet lambs and weathercocks, and felt he should like to have a regular flare-up just for once and shock every one," suggested Isabel; "I have often felt like that myself."

Everybody laughed, and then the rector said to Paul: "You are quite right in what you say about athletics being a good antidote against fads".

"Fads being the ruin of any political party," added Mr. Ford.

"But a man's duty to his own conscience comes before his duty to the State," said Edgar; "and I cannot see that any one is justified in defending a course of action which he considers wrong, simply because his party is pledged to that course."

"In politics, as in scene-painting," murmured Mr. Madderley, "I suppose one has to consider general effects rather than minute details."

"And the pre-Raphaelite school would not be effective from a political standpoint," added Mr. Ford.

The artist shrugged his shoulders. "I am not sure that it is from an artistic one."

"Are you not? Then I am afraid I shall have to quarrel with you, Mr. Madderley," said his hostess.

"Then you will have to quarrel with the rector too, and I will help you," remarked Mrs. Stoneley; "although I have been a devoted wife to him for forty years, he quarrels regularly with me every Academy because I like looking at pictures that he says are without perspective."

"I know the sort," cried Isabel, "dear little scriptural things, like tame and domestic church-windows."

"It is just like men to bother about perspective," added Mrs. Stoneley; "they are so literal, poor dears! that it is not safe to leave anything to their imaginations. Besides you cannot leave anything to something which does not exist."

The rector smiled. "Pardon me, my love, this consideration never hinders me from leaving many things to your discretion."

"Well, Henry, you never heard me fussing about perspective, whatever else I may have done."

"Certainly not, my love; a desire for perspective presupposes a sense of proportion."

"Never mind him, Miss Carnaby," said his wife; "you and I will go to the Academy together, and leave him at home to study perspective from the rectory windows."

The rector turned to Edgar. "I think that the idea of duty to one's own conscience is growing to abnormal proportions, and is in great danger of degenerating into a morbid and unhealthy egotism. As far as my experience goes, if a man fulfils his duty towards God and his duty towards his neighbour, he will not have much time left for works of supererogation."

"But are not one's duty towards God and one's duty towards one's own conscience synonymous?" asked Edgar.

Mr. Stoneley thought for a moment. "Not necessarily, I should say. One's duty towards God is clearly defined in our good old Church catechism; but one's duty towards one's own conscience is an elastic term, which may include anything from religious persecution to anti-vaccination."

Mr. Ford chuckled approvingly. "Quite true!"

"As a distinguished politician once said: 'Politics is the science of the second best,' " remarked Paul; "therefore we must recognize the truth that in political strife we can only approximately approach an ideal."

"Precisely," agreed his host; "everything in this world is a matter of compromise."

"I cannot admit that," cried Edgar with eagerness; "to me, compromise is a detestable word. It is our business to aim at perfection, and to be satisfied with nothing less. The fact that we may fail in our endeavour to attain our ideal, in no way lessens our obligation to follow after it."

"But the danger is," said his mother, "that if we go

in for perfection or nothing, we shall in all probability get nothing."

"I am afraid we must all be content with the second best in this world," remarked Mrs. Seaton.

"Yes," added Isabel, "like the man who said that as perfection in female beauty did not exist, he was looking out for a wife who could cook a potato properly."

"Certainly half a loaf is better than no bread," suggested Paul.

Edgar shook his head. "As long as people are content with half loaves they will never get whole ones."

"First let them be sure that they want whole ones," suggested Mr. Madderley.

"Exactly," cried Mrs. Stoneley. "People spend half their lives crying for things which would make them cry still more if they got them."

"Whole loaves would be very fattening, in the first place," continued the artist; "nothing would induce me to take one."

"Are you afraid of getting fat?" inquired Isabel, "I never think of it."

"This dread is the one cloud on my horizon, dear lady, the one discord in my life's harmony. You happy thin people do not know what troubles flesh is heir to, nor what fears."

"Do you think bread so dangerous?" asked Isabel.

"The most fattening thing in the world. I had a friend who said he once inadvertently asked for bread, and he gained a stone in a week."

Isabel laughed. "Then let us be content with only half a loaf; and, if we value our figures, we had better have that toasted."

"Contentment is often only a euphemism for cowardice," said Edgar.

"I am afraid S. Paul did not agree with you," remarked Mr. Seaton.

Edgar smiled; one of the reasons why he was so lovable was that he never lost his temper nor turned rusty in an argument. "S. Paul added godliness to the prescription, however, before he recommended it for general use," he said pleasantly.

Mr. Seaton laughed.

"It seems to me," continued Edgar, "that to bind oneself down to follow any particular party through thick and thin, is to do despite to one's own individuality."

"You know nothing at all about it," exclaimed his father.

The rector looked serious. "Individualism carried to excess soon becomes rebellion."

"Nevertheless," persisted Edgar, "it is one's duty to do what we think right, regardless of results. We know what was said of them who did evil that good might come; now we are afraid to do good lest evil may come, and I think that our condemnation is as just as theirs."

"I should be sorry to lead a party composed entirely of Edgars," Paul remarked; "there would be a regular Giants' Causeway of rocks ahead."

Mr. Ford nodded. Paul's straightforward common sense always appealed to him.

"There you go again!" cried Edgar. "Caution is your watchword, and it is a word I hate."

"So do I," agreed Isabel; "all the mistakes of my life have arisen out of caution."

"So have all the successes of mine," added Mr. Ford drily.

Mrs. Ford looked anxiously at Isabel. "I trust that your horror of caution does not extend to matters affect-

ing your health, my dear ; it is never safe for any one to run risks, and you do not look at all strong."

Isabel laughed, and Paul felt a sudden tightening of the muscles round his heart, and a moment's unreasoning hatred of Mrs. Ford. Who does not know the bitter loathing that we all feel when some one suggests to us that our nearest and dearest are not looking well ? Such speakers are probably kind, or, at worst, only careless ; but we hate them more than we hate the foes who wish to injure us.

"Mrs. Ford has been looking after my health too," said the artist.

His hostess smiled. "I only said I would not allow him to work too hard while he was here, and I advised him to take a glass of new milk at tea-time."

"The new milk is making a new man of me," said Mr Madderley, looking gratefully at Mrs. Ford for all his quizzing.

"Now milk really is a fattening thing," Isabel said, shaking her head, "so is water."

"Is it, dear lady ? I never take it."

"Then you ought to ; I always do."

"The fairest flowers demand their dew," murmured the artist, bowing to Isabel.

"And artists—like poets and muses and people of that sort—live upon nectar, I presume," she retorted.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Madderley ; "it is always a case of nectar or nothing with us."

"I know it is ignorant of me," said Joanna, "but I always confuse nectar with manna."

"So do I," echoed Alice.

"I don't believe that people would be satisfied with manna now-a-days," said Isabel ; "they would want something more spicy than angels' food."

"Other times, other mannas," murmured the artist.

Isabel laughed again; and Paul wondered how any man could be such an idiot as to make puns. He did not quite realize that he would have laughed himself if Isabel had not done so, and would have thought Madderley an amusing fellow; but he did not like Isabel's evident amusement at all.

The conversation flowed on pleasantly all through dinner, and everybody was happy except Alice; but the sight of Paul's obvious devotion to Isabel proved a large fly in her ointment. It did not make her wild with jealousy as it would have made some women, nor hard and bitter as it would have made others; it merely reduced her to a humble and pitiful condition of mind, in which she wanted her mother to comfort her—or else another man to make love to her as Paul was making love to Isabel.

It is so easy for a woman to create a new heaven and a new earth for herself—especially the former—out of whatever she may have at hand. She must have a heaven of some kind, however scanty may be the materials wherewith she has to build; just as a little girl must have a doll, if it be only a bundle of rags tied round with a string. But men do not understand this. To them the manufacture of the new heaven and the new earth is not so simple; they cannot so easily sweep away the historical ruins of their past, and erect a fresh fabric upon the old foundations; for men are strong to do—and (still harder task!) to do without. They can live—after a fashion—without a heaven at all; and would rather do so than have a jerry-built edifice made up out of scraps they have not themselves chosen. But to women, poor souls! a heaven of some kind is a necessity of their being; and though the new one may not be formed after their ideal

pattern like the old, it is better than nothing, and will probably in the end make them quite as happy.

Therefore Alice, feeling herself left out in the cold when she saw Paul and Isabel together, was in the state of mind that she would have accepted—and actually fallen in love with—Edgar, had he availed himself of these circumstances to propose to her. But poor Edgar had never learnt the art of making slaves out of circumstances. He was a good man and chivalrous, and he always did the right thing—but he invariably chose the wrong time for doing it. Just then he felt particularly tender towards Alice. He saw that she saw how Paul's face softened at the sight of Isabel; and he realized that every sign of affection shown towards Isabel by Paul was a fresh thorn in Alice's path. Edgar argued that if he lost Alice, no other woman could comfort him; and that therefore, Alice having lost Paul, no other man could comfort her. He forgot that love to a man is like health—he can exist after a fashion without it, though he cannot attain to a high standard of happiness; but that love to a woman is like life—she must have it, in some form or another, or else she will die.

It is interesting to notice that the men who happen to be in love, always join the ladies in advance of the others; consequently Paul and Edgar did not sit long over their wine. Paul went straight up to Isabel; and Edgar—with his ready instinct to help anybody who was hurt—asked Alice to come and see a new and rare orchid that was in the conservatory. After they had duly admired the orchid, they sat down beside the cool marble fountain. Edgar longed to take Alice in his arms and kiss her, she looked so pretty and so sorrowful; but instead of that he began to talk about the Sidbury election.

"I shall be sorry if the Tory has got in," he said; "it

will vex my father, and I cannot bear to see him disappointed. He spoke at Sidbury last week, and made such a capital speech."

"Did he?" said Alice. She was wondering whether Paul would have loved her if she had been as clever as Isabel.

"But though it grieves me to see him disappointed," continued Edgar, "I am afraid it will some day be my duty to disappoint him more than any one. It will nearly break my heart, and yet I fear I shall be obliged to do it."

"How dreadfully sad!" murmured Alice. She was thinking that after all Isabel was not nearly as good-looking as she was, and that most men consider beauty far more important than brains in a woman.

"It is cruel work, Alice, when one's duty and one's affections clash! I sometimes wonder if my duty to my father is not more binding than my duty to my own conscience; yet if I acted as I thought wrongly, in order not to vex my father, I fancy such a course would be the doing of evil that good might come."

Alice sighed. "I expect it would." She was wishing she had been clever instead of pretty; it seemed to pay better in the long run after all.

Edgar went on: "I cannot help feeling that political life in a measure blunts one's finer perceptions and lowers one's ideals. Of course I see, with my father, that from the party point of view a certain amount of unanimity is imperative; but from the personal point of view I cannot see that a man is justified in sacrificing his own principles—and the expression of them—to any consideration whatever."

"Of course not," said Alice. She was wondering if Paul talked to Isabel about political and personal points of view, and if Isabel had any idea what it all meant.

"You see, Alice, the Sermon on the Mount is as binding now as it was eighteen centuries ago; yet who now gives his cloak to them that take his coat; or who strives to be meek and merciful and poor in spirit?"

Alice looked at Edgar. He was a handsomer man than Paul and much more religious; she wondered she did not like him as well.

"It is very difficult for me to talk about the things I really care for," he continued, his eyes bright with excitement. "I never do it to anybody except you, but you are different from everybody else. I cannot reconcile to my conscience the present attitude of the rich towards the poor—that is what troubles me so much."

"Does it? I am so sorry," said Alice gently. She was grieved for Edgar to be unhappy, but she wondered that he let a trifle such as this make him so.

"Yes; I cannot get it out of my mind. When the charge is brought against us, 'I was a stranger and ye took Me not in,' do you think it will be enough to answer: 'Lord, there were the workhouses and the poor rates; and indiscriminate charity was supposed to pauperize the lower classes'?"

Alice shook her head. "Of course not."

"Then what ought we to do?—or rather, what ought I to do? For it is my own beam that I must be looking after, and not my brother's mote. Oh! Alice, I think of this night and day, and yet I come to no satisfactory conclusion."

"Poor Edgar!" Alice was really sympathetic now. Conversation about politics did not interest her; it was completely over her head. But here was a man in trouble, crying out for help and comfort; this she understood well enough, and her woman's heart longed to comfort him.

"I cannot bear to grieve my father," sighed Edgar; "he has always been such a good father to me."

"And you have always been such a good son to him."

"I have tried to be; but that is not enough. The young man in the gospels had evidently been a good son, as he had kept all the commandments. Nevertheless he was called upon to sell all that he had and give to the poor."

"But there are lots of good men who don't sell all they have to give to the poor," suggested Alice; "and yet there is no doubt that they are quite as religious as you are, and quite as conscientious."

"I see that," agreed Edgar; "but every one is not called upon to make the same sacrifice. A man who is called to preach the gospel, has no right to disregard that call because some other man has not received it. We are each appointed to our separate work; and each man has got to do his own work, and not somebody else's because he thinks that would suit him better."

"Alice," called Mrs. Ford from the drawing-room; "come and give us some of your charming music, my dear."

So Alice went to the piano and sang "Robin Adair," in a voice to which Nature had given sweetness, and Sorrow had added expression. While she sang, Edgar felt a lump in his throat, and again longed to take her in his arms and console her; and Isabel's eyes filled with tears as she realized that what made London balls so fine and crowded assemblies so brilliant, was the presence of Paul Seaton; while Paul himself hoped that Alice's song would soon be over, so that he might go on talking to Isabel.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Country of Conceit.

Safe screened by hills on either hand
From winter storms and summer heat,
There lies a silly little land—
The Country of Conceit.

ONE afternoon, not long after Isabel's visit to Chayford, Paul was having tea at the Farleys' house in Prince's Gate; and Lady Esdaile was there also, looking prettier than ever. Paul was feeling particularly happy, as he had done ever since Isabel had made herself at home among his own people; she had fulfilled even his ideal of her, and consequently he was content. He had yet to learn that the fact of a woman's being an angel in May, is no ground for supposing that she will be equally angelic in June—or even angelic at all. Isabel—with her fatal aptitude for taking her tone from her surroundings—was as earthly in London as she had been heavenly at Chayford; that is to say, the outward and visible Isabel was; and poor Paul, with all his love for her, as yet lacked the wisdom to understand her thoroughly. It always seems a pity, with regard to love-making, that when people are old enough to have learnt the game properly, they are generally too old to want to play at it. In this respect it is inferior to whist.

"Isn't London adorable just now?" exclaimed Isabel.

"Everything is in such a rush that one has not time to think about anything."

"Rather a doubtful advantage, I should say," suggested Paul.

"Not at all. I hate thinking, it makes my head ache," replied Isabel flippantly.

Paul looked surprised and puzzled; was this the same woman who had sat beside him in Chayford Chapel and sung "There is a land of pure delight"? He did not know that Isabel's character was as yet so unformed that she was frightened at the depth of her own feelings, and that this was a feeble protest on her part against an emotion that was threatening to overwhelm her.

Lady Esdaile shook her head. "Mr. Seaton is right; it is shocking not to have time to think. The other day I was actually putting on a gown for the Wallingfords' dinner that I had worn there once before, simply because I was in such a hurry that I had not time to give proper attention to my wardrobe. Fortunately my maid happened to remember in time. But think how awful it would have been if I had worn the same dress at the same house twice in one season!"

"Dreadful!" agreed Isabel. "It is wonderful what an effect clothes have on one's character. Personally I have not the courage to show myself if I do not feel I am suitably attired; a characteristic which I inherit from my first parents."

Lady Farley laughed. "I think our conversation is greatly affected by our clothes," she remarked. "I can never administer a social snub properly unless I am wearing either fur or diamonds; and I couldn't possibly pray in a hat, or without a veil."

"I quite agree with you, Caroline," said Lady Esdaile; "I cannot bear to see a married woman of my age in

church in a hat. And yet the unmarried ones look all right. Isn't it funny that a little thing like getting married should make all the difference between wearing a hat or a bonnet on Sunday?"

"Very funny," replied Lady Farley; "but great effects do result from small causes, Constance."

"They certainly do; I came upon an instance of that only the other day. The Featherstonehaughs' cook died suddenly, and so Mabel Featherstonehaugh was sent off straight to the Ellisons', as anything of that kind in a house is so unpleasant, you know."

"Of course it is," remarked Lady Farley, with her satirical smile.

Lady Esdaile continued: "Willie Philipson happened to be staying at the Ellisons' at the same time, and was so taken with Mabel that I shouldn't be surprised if he made her an offer. It would be an awfully good match for her; and yet if the Featherstonehaughs' cook had not happened to die just then, she and Willie might never have met each other."

Paul laughed; this speech was so exactly like Lady Esdaile and its flippancy did not irritate him at all. But he was conscious that if Isabel had said such a thing he would have felt more angry than he could express. Isabel also was conscious of this, and resented it. She argued that if Paul really cared for her, he would approve of everything she said and did; Paul, on the contrary, argued that because he really cared for her, it was agony to him when she said and did the things that he did not approve of; consequently (in speaking of a woman the word *consequently* is applicable here—had it been a man that was referred to, such an expression as *strange to say* would have been better)—consequently Isabel ran full tilt against all Paul's prejudices and theories.

"Aunt Caroline is right in saying that our conversation depends upon our clothes," she said ; "mine is entirely guided by them."

"Oh! no, it isn't," ejaculated Paul ; "you are talking nonsense."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, I am not ; I must know better than you do what are the sources of my own wit. Have you never noticed that I am subdued in black, poetical in blue, innocent in green, and brilliant in yellow?"

"And what in white?" asked Lady Esdaile with interest.

"White I never wear, Aunt Constance, for the dual reason that my hairs are dark and my years are many."

"But it is so economical," persisted Lady Esdaile ; "if you wear white, people never remember it."

"And they never remember me either," added Isabel, "I look so very plain in it."

"I am afraid we are shocking Mr. Seaton," said Lady Esdaile sweetly, "he looks so serious. But that is the worst of men ; they despise us if we try to look nice, and they ignore us if we don't."

"Come, Lady Esdaile, we are not quite as bad as that."

Lady Esdaile sighed. "Yes, you are. And then, again, you hate us for getting old, and you laugh at us for trying to keep young. You really are tiresome creatures!"

Paul was amused. "I own we are hard upon you when you tell fibs about your ages, because such fibbing seems so foolish to us. When will women learn to be as proud of being old as they are now of being young?"

"When men admire old women as much as young ones, and not a moment before," replied Isabel smartly.

Every one laughed.

"I believe men really care as much about their clothes as we do about ours," continued Lady Esdaile; "only they don't talk about them as much. But that is because they are so reserved and queer. I've noticed men never talk about what they are thinking about. Isn't it funny of them? I expect it is because they are so clever, they can hide what they feel."

"The fools care about their clothes; but the clever ones are too clever to see that they are not clever enough to be independent of trifles," said Isabel, throwing the gauntlet down before Paul.

But he was too wise to pick it up just then, though he knew perfectly well that it was there.

So she rattled on: "I wonder if it would be possible for a woman to love a man well enough to condone his excellencies and to pardon his virtues. Love has accomplished some wonderful parlour-tricks, I admit; but I don't think it has ever gone so far as to throw a halo round a man with a conscience."

"Don't you?" said Paul drily; "I fancy you somewhat underrate the powers of the little blind god, and overrate the folly of your own sex."

"Don't have too much faith in my own sex," advised Isabel.

"Do not quarrel, my children," murmured Lady Farley; "the weather is too warm for anything but peace."

Lady Esdaile rose; she always left the room when any signs of a storm were brewing, and therefore had the character of being a peacemaker. "I must be going," she said; "I have so many calls to pay this afternoon. Good-bye, dear people."

Lady Farley went downstairs with her sister-in-law, and left the lovers to themselves.

There was a moment's silence, and then Paul asked : 'Whatever possessed you to talk such nonsense as you have been doing this afternoon? You didn't mean a word of it.'

Isabel pouted. She did not like to be scolded ; she was not accustomed to it. "I did mean it. I'd as soon talk to a man with a hobby as a man with a conscience. They are both boring."

"You wouldn't ; and you do yourself an injustice when you say things like that."

Isabel felt really cross ; now and then Paul's superiority irritated her, and she kicked against it. This was one of the occasions.

"I wish a touch of human nature was added to the thousand and one excellencies which beset you," she said ; "it would make you more amusing in this world, without in the least interfering with your chances for the next."

"I am human enough, goodness knows !"

"No, no, my dear sir ; believe me, you flatter yourself. You are a *rechauffé* of King Arthur and Jack the Giant-killer, flavoured to taste with extracts from the *Fairchild Family*."

Paul smiled somewhat grimly. "Nevertheless you were kind enough to select me as your future husband."

"Not 'unless I might have another for working-days ; your grace is too costly to wear every day,' but you will be just the thing for Sundays."

"You are very cross this afternoon," said Paul, trying to be pleasant ; "but now you are coming for a walk with me, and that will do you good."

"No, I'm not."

Paul looked surprised. "Why not? You said that you were."

"I daresay I did; but I have changed my mind."

"But why? It is such a lovely afternoon, and it is now cool enough for walking."

Isabel looked at Paul from under her long eyelashes. He had been disagreeable, and she felt it her duty to punish him; she was a strict disciplinarian where her lover was concerned, and never let her own feelings hinder her from giving him such chastisement as she thought needful. To do them justice, however, it is but fair to add that her feelings were very accommodating in this respect, and rarely attempted to stand between Paul and the consequences of his misdeeds; on the contrary, they rather enjoyed the fulfilment of the decrees of inexorable justice.

"I don't want to go out this afternoon, because Lord Wrexham said he might call," she replied.

Inexorable justice was satisfied. The sentence—if out of proportion to the crime—was exactly suited to the criminal. Isabel was a connoisseur in punishments.

The victim was silent for a moment, then he said: "You ought not to have made any engagement for this afternoon, after you had promised to go out with me; your time was not your own".

"I don't care whose it was; anyhow I mean to take it and use it as I like."

"But you have no right to."

Isabel laughed. "Bah! who talks about 'rights now-a-days? Nobody has really any right to anything, except sufficient earth to bury them. I shall do what I want."

"Then do you mean to say you want to stay in and see Lord Wrexham?"

Isabel nodded.

"Confound him!" said Paul savagely.

"There! you are human after all," cried Isabel triumphantly.

"I always said I was. It was you that stated the opposite, if you remember. There is no doubt that the point is now proved beyond dispute, but it is my statement that you have supported, not your own."

"I think jealousy is a disgusting fault," said Isabel.

"I think so too, but that doesn't cure it. At any rate you will admit that it is extremely human."

Isabel shook her head sorrowfully, though she was really enjoying herself immensely. "It is very wrong and horrid and so like a man. I believe the reason why Paradise was Paradise to Adam was because he was the only man on the ground."

"Very probably; and the old Adam is so strong in me—in spite of your remarks to the contrary—that I mean to be the only man on the ground, too."

"You've got a horrid temper, Paul; you are like the man who always quarrelled with people till they liked him. You will never make anybody do what you want, if you go on in that way."

"Oh! yes, I shall. There is only one person in the world that I wish to do what I want, and she will do it in twenty minutes from now."

Isabel tossed her head. "Oh! dear no, she won't."

"Oh! dear yes, she will."

"How shall you make her?"

"I shall not *make* her; she will do what I wish her to do, partly because it is right, but chiefly because I wish it and she wishes to please me."

Isabel's face grew very red. "You are simply vile and detestable and altogether horrid!"

"I am quite aware of that, and therefore it is all the more wonderful that a woman who is simply delightful

and brilliant and altogether charming should be ready to do as I wish."

Isabel shrugged her shoulders. "Nothing will induce me to go out this afternoon—nothing!"

Paul smiled and was silent.

Isabel stamped her foot. "I am not going to walk about London with a nasty disagreeable man, and I tell you so, once for all."

Paul looked at his watch. "Sixteen minutes before we start; I do not want to hurry you, but I know you like plenty of time to tie your veil and to see that your hair is all right."

Isabel looked very cross. "You are the most detestable man I ever met!"

"That may be; but, as I remarked before, your feeling is what the old hymn terms 'well-dissembled'."

"Well, I do hate you."

"All right. If this is hatred I am well content with it, and I would not change places with the people whom you love for worlds."

Isabel looked at herself in the glass. "If there is one thing I despise more than another," she remarked to her reflection, "it is a woman who does what a man tells her."

Again Paul found refuge in silence and smiles.

Isabel hummed a tune out of *Patience*.

"Twelve minutes before we start," said Paul, *à propos* of nothing.

Isabel stole a look at him. "What should you do if I didn't go?" she asked.

Paul pulled his moustache to hide a smile. "You would soon see what I should do," he said cautiously. He had learned that the terrors of the Unknown evaporate with fuller knowledge, so he did not enlighten Isabel;

moreover he would have found a difficulty in so doing, as he did not know himself.

"What should you do?" she persisted.

"Like 'the story of Auld Grouse in the gun-room,' my programme is all the more effective for not being told."

"I don't believe you know what you would do."

"Don't I though?" And there was laughter in Paul's eyes. "Besides," he added; "what is the use of providing for impossible contingencies?"

"It is the impossible that always happens," said Isabel.

"Except when it is the unexpected," corrected Paul.

Isabel pulled a yellow rose out of her belt, and began picking it to pieces. "Why are you so keen on making me go out with you this afternoon?" she asked.

"Because I want to enjoy the pleasure of being with you, and because every man has a right to his own."

"Then you don't care about *my* pleasure?"

"Pardon me; I care so much about it that if I thought it really was a greater pleasure to you to stay in and see Lord Wrexham than to go out with me, I would never ask you to go out with me again. But I don't think so, and that makes all the difference."

"You are jealous of Lord Wrexham; that is the long and short of it," said Isabel.

"Possibly," replied Paul drily.

"I never heard such rubbish!" And Isabel plucked at the rose with impatient fingers.

Paul looked at his watch again. "Just five minutes," he murmured, as if to himself.

"I hate you!" cried Isabel stamping her foot.

"I know; you said so a short time ago, and I told

you that your hatred was the best thing in life, if you remember. Repetition is not argument, my dear Isabel."

Isabel did not answer; but, in spite of her hatred, she ran upstairs and put her hat and gloves on, and was down again before the twenty minutes had elapsed. And she did not know that while she was out of the room Paul picked up the remnants of the rose she had played with, and kissed them before he slipped them into his pocket-book.

People generally called Paul Seaton a hard man. They would have changed their opinion if they had seen his face when he kissed Isabel's shattered rose. But Paul was not the sort of man to kiss roses when there was any chance of being seen.

When Isabel came downstairs she looked so nice that Paul pursued the same course of treatment with her that he had pursued with the yellow rose; and with even greater satisfaction, to judge by the expression of his face.

"Why do you like me so awfully?" she asked.

"Because you are you, and because you are mine."

"Haven't we been horrid to each other this afternoon?"

Paul smiled. "I have been horrid, but you are never anything but charming, sweetheart."

"Oh! I know I'm none the less charming for being horrid sometimes; and—to tell the truth—neither are you. I believe that we are both nicest when we are nasty, and that when we hate each other we love each other the most."

Then they both laughed and went out and walked along the unfrequented and grassy ways of the park.

"Are you going to the Fulfords' to-night?" asked Isabel.

"No; they haven't asked me. Are you?"

"Not if you are not; I hate the parties that you don't go to. To adapt an old bull, you spoil half the parties by not being asked to them."

Paul shrugged his shoulders. "It is my misfortune and not my fault; for I am green with jealousy of every living soul who is invited to a party where there is a chance of meeting you."

"Isn't it funny," said Isabel meditatively, "how one person can make such a lot of difference? Paul Seaton goes away for a day or two, and London becomes as sparsely populated as the steppes of Russia and as desolate as the Great Sahara; Paul Seaton comes back again, and the place is as crowded as if it were the scene of a Jubilee procession or a royal wedding."

"Thank you," said Paul simply.

"I am going to bring out a new arithmetic book," continued Isabel, "with problems such as these: Take one from five millions and only one remains—and that one is yourself and very lonely."

Paul laughed, and Isabel rattled on: "Add one to two, and the result is still two; for the one is sadly *de trop*, and so is shaken off as soon as possible".

"What a clever mathematician it is!" said Paul fondly.

"You are rather a swell at mathematics yourself, aren't you?" asked Isabel.

"I wasn't bad at them when I was at Oxford."

"Yet, my dear Paul, you are very slow at putting two and two together. I have often noticed it."

"Because that is a higher branch than those in which I was proficient. But wherein have I failed lately to satisfy the examiners on this score?"

"You don't always understand women—me, I mean."

"Do not blame Oxford for that; there was nothing in the least like you in the mathematics that I studied at the 'Varsity. They were dull, stupid things, with reason in them."

"How horrid!"

"And when you put two and two together they invariably came to four," continued Paul; "can you imagine anything more tame and uninteresting?"

"Nothing. Now what is the result of putting two and two together when you are dealing with me?"

Paul thought for a moment; then he said: "Sometimes five and sometimes a million; one can never tell; all one can tell for certain is that the result never will be four. The only conclusion it is never safe to arrive at in dealing with a woman is the only logical one."

"Which do you like best—me or mathematics?"

"My dear child, what an absurd question!"

"Which do you?" persisted Isabel.

Paul grew serious. "When I was at Oxford I liked classics better than mathematics, and rowing better than both of them; after I left the 'Varsity, I began to care about power and success and fame more than about rowing; now I love you more than power and success and fame put together, with all the kingdoms of the world thrown in."

"My dear old boy!"

"I only want to succeed now, in order that I may have the more to offer to you," continued Paul; "I feel that money is worth getting because it will give you ease; power, because it will give you rank; and fame, because it will give you pleasure. I used to care for these things for their own sake, now I only care for them for yours; and consequently I care ten times more for them than I used to do, and am ten times

more keen on winning them. By Jove! if only I had Edgar Ford's chances, wouldn't I make my wife one of the most envied women in London!"

"Yet Edgar will never do much," said Isabel.

"I know he won't; that is the pity of it. If I were in Edgar's place, with all his advantages, I would be in the Government before I was forty. As for him, he will either not go into Parliament at all, or else throw up all chance of office by figuring as an independent member. As if a great empire could be governed by a bundle of fads!"

"Edgar is really an ascetic," said Isabel.

"Edgar is really an ass," said Paul.

Isabel shook her head. "He is a perfect angel in some things."

"And a perfect ass in others," repeated her lover.

"It is not always easy to tell the difference between an ass and an angel," remarked Isabel; "it confused Balaam a good deal, don't you remember? When he thought that it was only an ass that was hindering him on his journey, it turned out to be really the angel of the Lord. And Balaam's is not an uncommon mistake."

"Sweetheart, you are ingenious."

"I was only trying to keep you from repeating Balaam's blunder."

Paul sighed. "It is the sort of blunder to which I am prone; I should have been irritated with the creature, if I had been Balaam."

"I know you would; you are always so sure of yourself, and you cannot bear to be thwarted."

"But you shall be my angel, dear, and always stand in the way when you think I am wrong. You could turn me back from anything, Isabel."

"But you like Edgar, don't you?" Isabel asked.

"Like him? I should think I do. I consider he is one of the best fellows under the sun, and I have the greatest respect as well as affection for him. But I cannot help thinking that he uses the microscope too much and the telescope too little, figuratively speaking."

"I know what you mean."

Paul went on: "He so strains his moral eyesight with splitting hairs, that he is incapable of taking in a large general effect; and he is apt to confuse prejudices with principles, and crotchets with creeds. He is not content with conforming to the spirit of the law; he will obey it in the letter as well."

"I do not think you are just to Edgar," said Isabel.

"Possibly not. I am so much impressed by the necessity of attaining what is good, and the impossibility of rising to what is perfect, that it irritates me to see men neglecting an obvious duty for the sake of an impracticable dream."

"Do you think there is any danger of this in theoretical people?"

"I do," replied Paul. "Of course I know that it is better to build a cathedral than to make a boot; but I think it is better to actually make a boot, than only to dream about building a cathedral. It is far nobler to do great things than small things, I admit; but it is nobler to do small things than to waste all one's time in wanting to do great ones, and to end by doing nothing at all."

"Edgar certainly is a theorist."

"Edgar was born several centuries too late," continued Paul; "in the early days of Christianity he would have been an heroic martyr; in the middle ages, a cloistered saint; just after the Reformation, a consistent Puritan; at the time of the evangelical revival, an ideal early Methodist; but in the nineteenth century—as the

intellectual son of a wealthy merchant—there seems no place for him.”

“You and I, on the contrary, are very modern, aren’t we, Paul? Old-fashioned things—such as wigs and cowls and martyrdoms—would not have been at all becoming to us.”

And then the lovers fell to talking about themselves, and forgot Edgar and everybody else in their absorption in the subject under discussion.

CHAPTER XIV.

Expulsion from Eden.

You took my heart and made it beat,
Then trampled it beneath your feet
And watched its cracks and creases.
Unless I make a great mistake,
A heart thus hurt was bound to break;
So say no more, for pity's sake,
But sweep up all the pieces.

WHEN the season was at its height it unfortunately happened that Isabel's evil genius made the suggestion that Paul was growing too headstrong and masterful, and prescribed a good dose of jealousy as a cure for this complaint. Of course Isabel should have known better than to listen to such dangerous promptings, and should forthwith have silenced the lying spirit by her faith in her lover and in his love for her. But no mortal is wise at all times—not even when the mortal happens to be a woman; and this was a time of un wisdom on Isabel's part.

"Paul is too sure of your love," whispered Isabel's evil genius; "now that you are always nice to him he takes your niceness as a matter of course."

"Paul is right to be sure of my love," replied Isabel's better self; "it is a poor trick to try to enhance the value of anything by pretending that its existence is precarious."

"There is no good in having power if you never use it," argued the evil genius.

"There is no good in having love if you ever abuse it," answered the better self.

"Paul is not nearly as fond of you as he was at first."

"Paul loves me as much as ever, and it is a shame to doubt him."

"If he is as fond of you as he was, why has he ceased to look black when you speak to another man?"

"Because he knows that I love him and he trusts me."

Then the evil genius whispered: "Do you think it would be possible to make him as jealous as he used to be?"

"I am sure it would, but nothing would induce me to try."

"Still it would be an interesting experiment—just to see for certain if he does love you as much as ever," suggested the evil genius.

This argument in Isabel's inner consciousness continued for several days; and the result of it was that—at a dance at the Gordons'—Isabel flirted outrageously with Mr. Madderley. Paul took it very well at first; he had perfect confidence in Isabel, and he knew that it does not do to pull the reins too tight. Isabel noticed that he took it very well, and put his endurance down to indifference; consequently she flirted harder than ever.

By an almost superhuman effort, Paul refrained from saying a word to Isabel on the subject, and succeeded in being quite kind and courteous when he bade her good-night, though he was in a fury of jealous misery underneath his calm exterior.

Isabel felt certain that such calmness showed that he did not care, and cried herself to sleep that night.

Paul argued that he owed it to Isabel to conceal his anguish.

Isabel argued that he owed it to her to reveal it.

Paul knew that you do not talk about a thing if it really hurts you.

Isabel knew that if a thing really hurts you, you cannot talk about anything else.

All through the following day this wretched state of things continued.

Paul was pale and quiet, and longed to throw himself into the Serpentine.

Isabel was flushed and brilliant, and talked to Lord Wrexham and Mr. Madderley in the Row.

Paul hoped that he might be kept from kicking Lord Wrexham and Mr. Madderley.

Isabel prayed that she might be kept from crying until she reached home.

Isabel thought that there was nothing in the world that mattered except love, but felt she would die sooner than let Paul see how much she cared for him.

Paul thought that there was nothing in the world that mattered except Isabel, but couldn't for the life of him imagine what had come to her.

Isabel decided that the only dignified course was to let Paul think she had ceased to love him.

Paul decided that the only honourable course was to give Isabel her freedom.

That night Isabel again cried herself to sleep, and Paul never went to sleep at all.

The next morning they both felt better, and repaired to Kensington Gardens on the chance of a meeting. Each was in a more reasonable and amiable frame of mind, and quite prepared to forgive the other if that other made an adequate show of penitence.

It was unfortunate, however, that neither had studied the part of the one to be forgiven.

Paul made up his mind that he would be patient with Isabel, and would not lose his temper however provoking she might be ; so he began quite gently—after the customary greetings : “ Look here, Isabel, I don’t want to say anything nasty, because nasty words always leave a scar behind ; but I wish you would not go on in the way you have done just lately. It isn’t fair to me, but that is of small consequence ; what really matters is that it isn’t fair to yourself, for it makes people say horrid things about you ; and that is the one thing that I cannot and will not bear.”

Isabel looked surprised. This was a funny beginning for a penitential confession. “ I don’t know what you mean.”

“ Oh ! yes, you do, dear,” said Paul patiently.

Isabel was annoyed ; she did not like being called over the coals as if she were a tiresome schoolgirl. “ Oh ! no, I don’t. And anyhow I don’t flirt worse than half the women in London.”

“ That is nothing to do with me, Isabel ; I don’t care a hang how much other women are talked about—I only care for what people say of you. Believe me, I am not blaming you, dear.”

“ Blaming me ?—I should think not !” exclaimed Isabel angrily. How could any self-respecting woman forgive a man who talked about not blaming her ?

“ I only want to save you from doing things in a moment of temper that I know you will regret afterwards,” added Paul.

Isabel’s face flushed. “ I can take care of myself, thank you ; I knew how to behave, even before I had the inestimable privilege of learning manners from Mr. Paul Seaton.”

Still Paul kept his temper. "You know, darling, you have been awfully rough on me the last few days; but I'll forgive you like a shot, and never say another word about it, if you will promise not to go on like that again."

"Thank you," said Isabel pertly. "I notice that as long as a clever woman is content to sit at a man's feet and say, 'This is the only man in the whole world,' that man thinks he enjoys the society of clever women; but if the clever woman happens to indulge in an opinion not implanted by him, he calls her unwomanly, and he pines for amiable stupidity."

"That is not fair, Isabel; I detest amiable stupidity."

"No, you don't; you really like it."

"Isabel, this is absurd, and you know it is."

Isabel felt absolutely sure now that Paul did not really care; an ideal lover would have been in a frenzy of agony at her anger, she thought, instead of taking it in this calm, superior way.

"I suppose you'd like me to be shut up like a Turkish woman, and never speak to any man but you!"

"Certainly not; but, all the same, I am not going to have my promised wife flirting with a lot of other men, and I tell you so. As I have said before, there are some things which a man would sooner renounce than share."

Isabel shrugged her shoulders. "You really have got a most detestable temper."

"Isabel, don't, for pity's sake, go on like this. There is nothing in reason that I would not do or bear for you, but it is possible to try a man too far."

"It strikes me there is precious little that you would do or bear for me, in spite of all your talk."

Paul looked very stern. "Do you really mean that?"

By this time Isabel had lashed herself into a perfect fury. "Yes, I do mean it; you are so proud and self-

centred that you only care for what enhances your own importance. You are pleased to be engaged to a smart woman, because it reflects credit on yourself; but for the feelings of the woman underneath her smartness, you don't care a rap."

"Isabel, be careful what you say."

"No, I shan't be careful. I am tired of being careful and of considering your feelings, when you never show the slightest consideration for mine. You are hard and cold and selfish—that is what you are—and it is time you knew it! You never really loved me; you admired me, because I was showy, and you thought that a showy wife would help you in your career; but you never loved me as a woman—only as one of the steps by which you could mount to success."

Paul's face was very white. "How dare you say such things to me?"

"Because I think them. You are precious careful, forsooth, for fear people should talk about me, because you think such talk is in some measure derogatory to you; but you are pretty careless as to what you say to me, as you know that whatever you say, it will be none the worse for yourself. You only care for me and my reputation as an adjunct to your own importance."

"If you were a man, I should say you lied."

"Oh! no, you wouldn't. You dare not say half the nasty things to a man that you say to me."

"If you had been a man I should have silenced you long ago."

By this time Isabel was very angry with herself, and consequently ten times angrier with Paul; so she continued recklessly: "As long as you only thought I liked the other men better than you, you didn't care; it was only when you began to think I was bringing discredit

on you, that you thought it necessary to make such a fuss”.

“Isabel, once for all listen to me.” Paul’s voice was so ominously quiet that a wiser woman—or even a foolish woman who was not in a temper—would have taken warning; but Isabel possessed the dangerous gift of a vivid imagination; and what was once humorously said of faith may be literally said of imagination, namely that “it makes people believe what they know to be false”.

“I won’t listen to you and I won’t be dictated to by you,” she retorted, goading herself to still further fury by her own words; “if you had your own way, you would make a perfect slave of me, and trample me under foot. But I won’t stand it.”

“Isabel, you are very cruel and very unjust; have you no consideration for my feelings?”

“Not I. Why should I, when you have none for mine? You seem to think that feelings are a sign of exquisite refinement peculiar to yourself, and you are so busy seeing that everybody fulfils their duty to you, that you have no time to think of your duty to other people.”

“We have had enough of this,” said Paul, rising from his seat.

“More than enough, I should say.”

“Still I have one question to ask. Did you mean it when you said that I only cared for you as a stepping-stone to my own success?”

Isabel tossed her head. “Of course I meant it; you never care for anything or anybody that does not minister to your own pride.”

Paul’s face was white, and his voice shook. “Then I have only one thing to say before I go out of your life altogether. I will not profane my love for you by talking about it to a woman who would grow tired of any lover

as soon as his novelty had worn off; but I wish you to understand that I will neither see you nor speak to you, nor hold any communication with you, till you ask my forgiveness for having so insulted me, and till you retract that cruel untruth which in your heart of hearts you know to be untrue as well as I do."

Isabel drew herself to her full height, and her eyes blazed. It showed how little Paul really loved her, she thought, that he could give her up so easily. "Then you will never see me nor speak to me again," she said; "for I am not the woman to come grovelling to a man for pardon, because I once dared to tell him the truth to his face."

Without another word Paul turned on his heel and left her, and never once looked back. As he strode out of Kensington Gardens he felt that to him in future the place would be a cemetery rather than a garden, for there he had buried the one love of his life.

So Paul and Isabel passed out of each other's ken, simply because the latter had been fool enough to think that a good man's love was a thing to be played with, rather than a gift for which to "thank heaven, fasting".

There is no doubt that the troubles sent by Providence are always beneficial if taken in a proper spirit; but the troubles brought on by our own or another's ill-doing are not necessarily salutary at all. Therefore both Paul and Isabel were the worse for their separation.

Paul threw himself heart and soul into his work, and turned his back upon all the amenities of life. He had lost his faith in love and in his old ideals, and the loss was not good for him; he became morose and hard and cynical, and inclined to sneer at higher things. His love for Isabel had been so bound up with all that was best in him, that when Isabel failed, much of his best went

with her—at any rate for the time being, till the first bitterness of the disillusionment was past.

As for Isabel, she put on a brave face before the world, and spent her days in laughter and her nights in tears. While Paul hid his misery under a mask of stern moroseness, she concealed hers under an affectation of frivolity. She had never seemed so gay or so heartless or so worldly; and, after a while, her imagination almost persuaded her that she cared as little as she pretended to care. She never allowed herself time to think, and she nearly succeeded in believing that she was really forgetting Paul; nevertheless she grew thinner and paler, and there was a wan look underneath her restless brilliancy that Lady Farley did not care to see.

Isabel never had any news of Paul; he had completely passed out of her life. But Paul managed to glean tidings of Isabel; and the news that she was more amusing and more admired than ever did not in any way lessen his misery.

Paul wrote a curt letter to his own people saying that Isabel had broken off the engagement, but giving no reason; and he begged that her name might never again be mentioned in his hearing. The minister was sorry, but felt that it was according to the decree of Providence; Mrs. Seaton was grieved, but feared that it was owing to the pride of Paul; and Joanna was angry, and felt sure that it was because of the vanity of Isabel. All of which suppositions were not without a foundation of truth.

Lady Farley tried hard not to be glad that the engagement was broken off; but she only succeeded in hiding her gladness from her niece. And she comforted Isabel—according to her lights—by taking her into society more untiringly than ever.

One night, towards the end of the season, there was a party at the Marchioness of Wallingford's; and Isabel was, as usual, surrounded by a small court of men. She was looking particularly well in a yellow gown, which suited her dark hair to perfection. Mr. Maddерley, on learning from her in the Row that morning that yellow was to be her "only wear" at this party, had sent her a spray of yellow roses. But Isabel hated yellow roses; she had worn one in her belt the day that Paul made her go for a walk with him, and therefore—like Ben Jonson's "rosy wreath"—such flowers thenceforward smelt not of themselves but Paul. So she threw away the artist's gift, and would not touch it again.

"I suppose you will shortly be going down to Elton Manor, Miss Carnaby, and thereby turning London into a desert," said Lord Wrexham.

"No," replied Isabel. "I am not going to Elton, but to Homburg instead. I am getting too old for the country, do you know?"

"I cannot allow that," remonstrated his lordship.

"Yes, I am. I consider the country is only suited to people who are young enough to go in for picnics and ideals and things of that kind. Up to five-and-twenty, sunsets excite your highest emotions, and make you yearn after the impossible; after five-and-twenty, they give you rheumatism and show up your wrinkles."

"I like the country," remarked Lord Robert Thistle-town, "though I am at last in the proud position of being able to deny the soft impeachment of being under five-and-twenty; it always makes me feel good, and fills me with the desire to sing hymns and to write to my mother."

"I also like the country," murmured Mr. Maddерley; "it gives me a peaceful, lotus-eating kind of feeling, which is most soothing."

Isabel shook her head. "I could stand a land where it was always afternoon, but what I cannot endure is a land where it is always Sunday evening."

"I thought you liked Sunday evenings and things of that kind," remarked Lord Robert.

"I used to, but I have outgrown them," replied Isabel.

"Dear lady, I understand," sighed Mr. Madderley. "I never cared for Sunday evenings myself, but I used to adore Holman Hunt. It is the same kind of sentiment, and indicates the state of mind which would revel in Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality'."

"Have you outgrown it too?"

"I have not outgrown my appreciation of the art and the poetry thus embodied; but I have ceased to have any feeling excited thereby save admiration."

"I suppose the real explanation is that as we grow older we lose in imagination what we gain in experience," said Lord Wrexham.

Isabel shrugged her shoulders. "I think it rather lies in the fact that in drinking the draught of life we soon get through the white froth on the top and come to the small beer underneath."

"Well, I like Sunday evenings and hymns and things in that line," persisted Lord Bobby. "I even go to the length of liking Christmas Day."

"A man who can like Christmas Day will drink sweet champagne and enjoy it," remarked Madderley.

Lord Bobby shook his head. "Oh! I won't go that far."

"Now I, on the contrary," said Isabel, "cannot bear Christmas Day; it is neither one thing nor another."

"Yes, it is," argued Lord Bobby. "It is both; it is

a delicious compound of Sunday morning and Saturday afternoon."

"Just so," replied Isabel; "it wears a silk blouse with a serge skirt, and so is neither Sunday nor weekday. Now, sweet champagne I do like; and if people give their guests dry champagne, I think sugar and cream ought to be handed round with it, as they are with tea. But Christmas Day is another thing. To the young it brings unqualified bliss, I admit; but to the mature it brings passive depression followed by active indigestion."

"But you used to be awfully keen on goodness and all that sort of thing," objected Lord Robert. "I never met such a girl for ideals as you were at one time."

"My dear Bobby, I was once awfully keen on dolls and blind man's buff. As I told you, I am growing old."

Lord Robert looked puzzled and disappointed. "But you still believe in good people, don't you, Miss Carnaby?"

"Oh, yes; but they bore me. I believe in quinine as a drug, but I think it is very nasty as a flavour."

Lord Wrexham smiled indulgently. "The fact is that you have such a gay and sunny nature yourself that too much seriousness oppresses you and overpowers you. Ethereal beings cannot exist in a heavy atmosphere."

"I cannot endure the sort of good people who have their biographies written," exclaimed Isabel.

"Nevertheless, biography is the style of fiction I most affect," said Mr. Madderley, "especially the biographies of people I have met. It is so interesting to learn that what one had despised as dulness was in reality genius; and that what one had regretted as rudeness was in reality the scorn of a great soul for conventions."

"While what one condemned as bad temper was actually a noble struggle against evil," added Isabel.

"A saint in crape is twice a saint in print," murmured the artist.

"You shall write our biographies, Mr. Madderley, and show how I was wise, Lord Bobby was profound, and Lord Wrexham was—I don't know what Lord Wrexham had better be."

"Amusing, perhaps," suggested his lordship quietly.

"I should like to see you with a really serious-minded man, and hear how you got on with him," said Mr. Madderley. "I mean one of the sort of men who go in for duties and responsibilities and queer fads of that sort, and always keep a tame conscience in full work on the premises."

"Isn't it funny," remarked Isabel thoughtfully, "that if a woman talks to a man about his soul, other women call her a saint; while if she talks to him about his heart, they call her a flirt? They have not the sense to know that the flirtiness consists in talking to the man about himself at all."

All the men laughed.

"There is really nothing to talk about but ourselves," continued Isabel, "just as there is really nothing for breakfast but bacon. People try all sorts of fancy subjects and dishes, but they come back to where they started from, like boomerangs."

"You are a very clever young lady," said Lord Wrexham appreciatively. "You combine such keen powers of perception with such a great facility of expression."

"Thank you. I have devoted a considerable time to 'the proper study of mankind,' and I consider myself a proficient in the subject."

"It is a subject which repays careful study, my dear lady," remarked Madderley. "I know only one that excels it in interest, and that one—being composed entirely of

brilliant exceptions ungoverned by any guiding rules—I should describe as a dangerous recreation rather than as a proper study.”

“I don’t believe you understand men as well as you think you do,” exclaimed Lord Bobby bluntly.

Isabel raised her pretty eyebrows. “Don’t I, though?”

“Pardon me, Thistletown,” said Mr. Madderley; “you are surely mistaken. Miss Carnaby’s knowledge of this subject is experimental as well as profound, and her treatment of it is beyond—sometimes considerably beyond—all praise.”

An angry spot burned on Isabel’s cheek. “You are pleased to be very witty this evening, Mr. Madderley.”

“Once upon a time,” added the artist, “there was a rose who imagined she knew how to make beeswax, because there were always some bees buzzing round her. It amused the bees.”

“And what was the end of the story?” asked Isabel.

“The end, dear lady? There is but one end to all stories. The rose faded.”

CHAPTER XV.

Angus Grey.

He proved that Hope was all a lie,
And Faith a form of bigotry,
And Love a snare that caught him;
Then thought to comfort human tears
By sundry ill-considered sneers
At things his mother taught him.

EARLY in the year following Isabel's cruel treatment of Paul, a novel was published which made some little stir. It was called *Shams and Shadows*, and was by an unknown author, Angus Grey.

It was not what is generally known as a bad book; yet, nevertheless, it was very far from being good. Its cleverness was undeniable; but, on the other hand, its style was flippant, its teaching mischievous, and its philosophy cynical in the extreme. The aim of the book was to prove that the fashionable world is rotten at the core, and that the religious world is no better; and that in all Churches and sects there are little side-chapels dedicated to Mammon, where the majority of the worshippers are to be found.

Angus Grey was apparently a man who had eaten of apples of Sodom, and had found them turn to ashes in his mouth; and he was anxious to share his meal with

the rest of mankind, and to exclude no one from partaking of his bitter hospitality. Evidently he was a disappointed man, and his disappointment had not improved him. With a crude and cheap cynicism, he set forth that the ideals of youth are a dream, and the professions of later life a delusion; and he sneered alike at the follies of the young and the pretences of the middle-aged.

To Angus Grey there was nothing sacred, nothing holy; and he pointed his morals and adorned his tale with caricatures of personages well known in society.

To the initiated, some of the characters in *Shams and Shadows* were portraits but thinly disguised. It was easy to recognize Lord Wrexham, Bobby Thistle-town, and Mr. Madderley; but the best drawn character in the book was the heroine, who was the counterfeit presentment of Isabel Carnaby; yet not Isabel as she really was, and as Nature had meant her to be; but Isabel as she appeared to outward seeming, when the worldly and frivolous side of her character was uppermost. She had all Isabel's fun and sparkle and good-humour; but underneath them lay a cold and shallow selfishness, which disgusted the readers she had at first charmed.

At first everybody was asking who Angus Grey could be, as it was evident that he was some one well versed in the ways of this particular set; but gradually it was whispered about that the author of *Shams and Shadows* was "that young Seaton whom Isabel Carnaby threw over last season". Lady Farley was not surprised to hear this; she had long suspected it; but she took it upon herself to break the news to Isabel, as she did not know how her niece would take it.

"By the way," she said to Isabel one day, "it has

come out at last who Angus Grey really is ; it is the *nom de plume* of Paul Seaton."

Isabel started up, her face very white. "Who told you so? It isn't true. I won't believe it!"

"But you must believe it, my dear. It is an open secret. Everybody knows."

"How can people be so unjust? Paul would never have written a horrid book like that; I know him too well to believe such a thing."

"I grant you that it is not a nice book, said Lady Farley, "nor one that a gentleman would have written. But that he did write it, there is no doubt; for Bobby Thistlethorn met him and asked him straight out if he had adopted the name of Angus Grey, and Mr. Seaton confessed that he had. You know how Bobby goes straight to the point, and how there is no hoodwinking him when he wants to find out anything."

Isabel looked dumfounded. "Do you mean that Paul actually told Bobby that he was Angus Grey?"

"I have told you exactly what Bobby told me, so, you see, I come straight from head-quarters."

"What else did Bobby say to Paul?" asked Isabel.

"Oh, he congratulated him on the success of his book, and Mr. Seaton thanked him and said it had already had a great sale. But the fact is that Bobby was so disgusted with the personal tone of the book that he did not care to be on friendly terms with the author, so he cut the conversation somewhat short."

"Do you think it is such a horrid book, Aunt Caroline?"

"It isn't an improving book—no one pretends that it is; but it is very smart. And I cannot see that you, of all people, have any right to blame Paul Seaton for writing it. If it amuses you to break men's hearts, my

dear, by all means do it ; but do not cry out if the smash makes more dust and noise than you expected. Break-ages are often noisy, from tea-things upwards."

"But Paul never was flippant or cynical," persisted Isabel.

"Of course he was not till you made him so. As you know, I never liked Paul Seaton ; but I am a just woman, and in this matter I cannot help saying that I consider you are more culpable than he. I am not blaming you, my dear child, for I should probably have done the same thing at your age ; but if you have your fling you must be content to pay the bill."

Isabel sighed, and her aunt continued : "You deliberately broke the young man's heart and destroyed all his ideals ; yet you are surprised when, in return, he tries to prove to the world that love is a fable and idealism a folly. It is simply the natural outcome of your action."

"Oh ! Aunt Caroline, what shall I do ?"

"Nothing. There is nothing to be done ; it would have been more dignified, perhaps, had the man not cried out when he was hurt ; still it is very human to cry out when our pain seems more than we can endure, and I feel I cannot blame him much. If any one had treated me as you have treated Paul Seaton, I think it is in me to write quite as bitter a book as *Shams and Shadows*, and probably I should have done so."

"But Paul was different."

Lady Farley smiled. "Different from me, you mean ! My dear, you must remember that he was your lover and I am only your aunt, and you look at us through differently tinted spectacles. But human nature is pretty much the same in everybody, and when human nature is hit too hard, human nature hits back, either at its fellows, or at Providence, or at both. I admit that it was some-

what ill-bred of Mr. Seaton to abuse our hospitality by making 'copy' of our faults. Still if you objected to seeing the real nature of the Tartar, you should not have scratched the Russian so hard. Disappointment shows what stuff men are made of."

"I suppose it does," Isabel acquiesced.

"There is no doubt, my dear Isabel, that you behaved very badly to Paul Seaton; and it was a natural enough revenge, I think, to show to the world—in the person of his heroine—how heartless a fashionable woman can be. I really cannot see that you have any just ground for complaint, though perhaps some others of his characters have."

Then Isabel went to her own room, and cried as if her heart would break. She understood, as no one else could, the subtlety of Paul's revenge; and just at first she felt that her punishment was almost greater than she could bear.

After the secret of Angus Grey's identity leaked out, Paul Seaton sent the following letter to the minister:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I should be grieved for you to learn from any third person that I have adopted the pseudonym of Angus Grey. I know that *Shams and Shadows* is not a book that you will like—perhaps I do not like it myself—but I would remind you, before you pass judgment upon it, that people who are sorely disappointed do not preach gospels of peace and goodwill. I also wish to tell you that—however bitterly I may have been disappointed in other people—the reverence I have always felt for your religion and my mother's will abide with me to my dying day. Do not let anything that you may read in the pages of *Shams and Shadows* ever lead you to doubt this.

"Your affectionate son,

"PAUL SEATON."

Mrs. Seaton cried over *Shams and Shadows* in secret, and longed to comfort the sore heart that could have written such a story; Joanna disapproved of the teaching of the book, but could not help thinking it clever; and the minister dealt justly with the matter, and felt that sorrow was a reason for bitterness but not an excuse.

As he and Joanna were going for a long country walk one Monday afternoon, the latter said: "I am sadly disappointed that the book Paul has been going to write all his life has turned out to be such a book as *Shams and Shadows*; he ought to have done something so different; but all the same I do not blame Paul as much as I blame Isabel. Though Paul has actually written the book, it was Isabel's cruelty to him that made him capable of writing it; for I am certain that she was cruel, though Paul has never said so."

"My child," said Mr. Seaton, "I cannot see that any unkindness on the part of Isabel can justify Paul's action in this matter. No one does wrong without some sort of temptation or excuse; yet we are none of us tempted above what we are able to bear, and it is our duty to avail ourselves of the way of escape provided for us."

"But, father, think how our Paul must have changed before he could write a bitter, cynical book like that! And I cannot yet forgive the woman who has altered him so."

The minister shook his head. "A man is not justified in letting any woman, however dear, come between his own soul and God. His happiness may depend upon the woman he loves, I admit; but his religion should be independent of her, and of everybody except himself."

"But supposing he cannot help it."

"He must help it, Joanna; it is a man's first duty to be religious; a man who is not religious is not a whole man."

He may have a fine literary style and be an accomplished scholar—but he is not made in the image of God.”

“But would you call Paul’s book irreligious?” asked Joanna.

Her father thought for a moment. “I am afraid I should. It is not, of course, atheistic or immoral; I do not mean that; but it is cynical and flippant; and ‘he that is not with Me is against Me’.”

Joanna sighed. “It is sometimes difficult to be religious.”

“It ought not to be. Religion is not a bill of pains and penalties, but a charter of happiness. But, understand me, I do not condemn Paul’s book because it does not preach any special tenet or uphold any peculiar creed; for the older I grow the more catholic do I become.”

“I am not like that,” said Joanna; “as I grow older, the more fondly do I cling to my own ‘ism’—not because it is an ‘ism,’ but because it is my own.”

“You are still a great deal younger than I am. Our division lines are far too strong. The Church began in catholicity and must end in catholicity, and I would avoid all peculiar garbs or shibboleths. Anything which connects godliness with a grey gown or a close bonnet is not religion at all, but sectarianism. Therefore I do not blame my son for not preaching Methodism; I only blame him for not preaching Christ.”

“Yet you love Methodism as much as I do, don’t you, father?”

The minister’s face glowed. “Yes, I love it—of course I love it; but I do not condemn those who do not love it as I do. As long as there are different types of character, there must be different forms of worship; yet nothing appeals to me like the good old Methodist fashion of

bringing religion into the common experiences of everyday life, and treating it as a familiar thing. To a Ritualist this might seem irreverent; to a Broad Churchman, oppressive; but I always feel it may be said of the Methodists, as of the Israelites of old, 'They did eat and drink, and saw God'."

"The thing that grieves me in Paul's book is its want of idealism and its disbelief in the underlying goodness of human nature," remarked Joanna, as they turned into Chayford Wood.

"I do not agree with you there. Human nature, apart from God, is not a fine thing, and I have no sympathy whatever in the modern worship of Humanity with a capital H. Human nature is our disease—Christ is our cure; and a physician who diagnoses any complaint without suggesting the remedy, may be an able scientist, but he is a sorry doctor. I cannot quarrel with Paul for showing us that human nature is bad; but I do quarrel with him for trying to show us that religion is not much better."

"Still we must do Paul justice," said Joanna loyally; "and one cannot deny that *Shams and Shadows* is a brilliantly clever book."

"So be it; yet it is character—not intellect—that governs this world and inherits the next."

"Yet, father, if Paul were really in such dreadful trouble and bitterness of spirit, he could not write a book and keep himself, and therefore his sorrow, out of it."

"Perhaps not," replied Mr. Seaton; "then why write a book at all? Our fathers doubtless sorrowed as we sorrow now, yet they locked their grief up in their own breasts, while we proclaim it on the housetops. I cannot approve the modern custom of telling out all we know and feel."

"Don't you think people ought to write books?" asked Joanna.

"Not unless they have a message to deliver; and, moreover, a message which will make for good and not for evil. Now every boy who learns a lesson or loves a woman must needs write a book about it, till we feel inclined to ask, like the Egyptian of old: 'Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?'"

"That is quite true!"

"People are too anxious to make a stir in the world," continued her father; "the doctrine of to-day is that it is disgraceful to be unknown. The souls of modern men need all their wings to enable them to fly as quickly as their fellows, and they have none left wherewith to cover their faces and their feet."

"But, father, it is natural for men to long for fame."

"Natural, doubtless, my child, but not spiritual. Why will not men be content to love Christ and live contentedly as failures, remembering that—humanly speaking—His religion is a failure in the world to-day?"

"Still people have to make a living," argued Joanna the practical; "and if they can do it better by writing books than in any other way, I do not see why they shouldn't."

"If making a living be all we think of, we had better have been cows or horses," said Mr. Seaton; "in the present day, money and amusement are the only things people really care about, and poor things they are wherewith to satisfy immortal souls. But a writer is in a measure a preacher, and takes responsibilities upon himself towards others which he is bound to fulfil."

"Yes, father dear, I see what you mean."

"Every writer is an evangelist of some sort. Homer preached the gospel of war, and Virgil taught the ancients

the blessedness of a peasant's lot ; Horace pointed out the inherent meanness of human nature, and in Milton's hands we may say of the epic, as of the sonnet, that 'the thing became a trumpet' to proclaim the religious tenets of the Puritans. And I would rather that my son had followed in the steps of Virgil or of Milton than of Homer or Horace."

And then Mr. Seaton went on to expound to his daughter the messages and the methods of the ancient schools of poetry, and let Paul and his doings alone.

Not long after this, Paul Seaton came home for a short visit ; but his holiday did not prove a success. His family carefully refrained from saying anything derogatory of *Shams and Shadows* ; but Paul was so much afraid of their doing so that he was on the defensive all the time, and consequently decidedly disagreeable. Moreover, he was still very unhappy, and unhappiness does not tend to social charm. He appreciated his parents' forbearance about *Shams and Shadows* more than they had any idea of ; but, as yet, he was too sore and too deeply wounded to be able to say pleasant things to anybody ; therefore he unjustly got the credit of not feeling them. Altogether life was passing but roughly for Paul at that particular time.

Just before he went back to town, Edgar said to him : " You won't be vexed with me, will you, old fellow, if I speak to you as a friend about matters which do not concern me ? "

" Well, what is it ? " asked Paul ungraciously.

" I want you to write another book to counteract the influence of *Shams and Shadows*. No one understands better than I do the feelings which influenced you when you wrote it ; but feelings pass away, and a man is not always the same man. The talent displayed in the pages

of your book might have a decided influence for good if used in a right direction ; and I want you so to use it, and to rise to higher things on the stepping-stone of the dead self that wrote *Shams and Shadows*."

Paul smoked in silence, and Edgar went on : " And there is another argument I would use, if I were sure you would forgive me for using it, and not think me interfering or impertinent."

" Go on," said Paul, " it is all right."

" You see," said Edgar, " if we do anything as the result of a state of mind which has been brought on by the action of another person, that person is, in a measure, responsible for our action."

Paul nodded, and Edgar continued : " If we had ever loved that person, I do not think we should like to feel that they—through us—had wrought lasting evil ; this conviction would be a source of endless remorse to us, for the old love's sake, even long after that love was a thing of the past. We might be content to bear the consequences of our own share of ill-doing ; but we could not endure the idea that we ourselves had increased the responsibility of any one who had once been dear to us, however thoroughly they might have forfeited our affection. I won't say any more, old man ; it is very good of you to have listened to me so far ; and I think you will understand what I mean."

" Look here," replied Paul, " you have spoken very kindly to me, and I appreciate what you have said and, perhaps still more, what you have left unsaid ; and I will confess to you what I have confessed to no other living soul, namely, that I regret with all my heart that *Shams and Shadows* was ever written. I would gladly give twenty years of my life to unwrite it if I could ; but that, unfortunately, is impossible."

"You cannot unwrite it, I know," said Edgar; "but you can write a new book that will prove its antidote; and, by your new book's superior depth and power, you can make men forget that *Shams and Shadows* was ever written." And he laid a brotherly hand on his friend's shoulder.

Paul rose from his chair and stood with one elbow on the chimney-piece. "That is what I have been intending to do for some time. I mean to devote all my powers to writing a book in my right mind and in my right name, and I will endeavour to teach men that what is good is good, and what is bad is bad, which is, after all, the end of human wisdom. And people shall see that the cynicism of *Shams and Shadows* was the crying of an unhappy and wayward child rather than the knowledge and experience of a full-grown man."

"What will be the name of the new book?" asked Edgar.

Paul thought for a moment. "I think I shall call it *Some Better Thing*," he said.

CHAPTER XVI.

Success.

Upon the mountain top I stood
And all the land beneath me lay ;
I saw that earth was very good,
But heaven seemed just as far away.

IT was in the following winter that Paul Seaton's great book, *Some Better Thing*, took the literary world by storm, and carried its author at one bound from mere notoriety to abiding fame. Everybody read the book, and everybody who read it was the better for reading it. It was a novel with a purpose, and its purpose was to show that it is only by righteousness that men and nations prevail ; also, that there is much that is humorous in life as well as much that is holy, and that healing virtue lies in laughter as well as in prayers and tears. It was a strong book, and yet infinitely pathetic ; and it was perfectly free from the taint of shallow cynicism on the one hand and of mawkish sentimentality on the other. Preachers recommended its teaching, and speakers quoted its epigrams ; and, in short, Paul Seaton became the man of the hour, and Angus Grey was forgotten. This latter end was the more easily accomplished because the first edition of *Shams and Shadows* was sold out, and another was not forthcoming.

Some Better Thing brought great joy to the heart of
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Mark Seaton. That his son was among the successful writers of the day, was nothing to him; but that his son was among the great teachers of the day, was everything. Mrs. Seaton and Joanna likewise rejoiced, and felt that *Shams and Shadows* was expiated and done away with. So happiness reigned once more in Chayford Cottage.

As for Paul himself, the success of his book pleased him to a certain extent; and it was a source of keen delight to him to feel that men no longer condemned him as the writer of *Shams and Shadows*, but rather respected him as the author of *Some Better Thing*. But Isabel had spoiled his life for him, he felt; and no mere public applause could fill up the aching blank that she had left. She had gone near to marring his character as well; but he had come safely through the dark valley of humiliation and disappointment, and stood whole and in his right mind on the farther side. Yet his happiness had not survived the chills of the dark valley; and fame without happiness is but a sorry jest at best. What matters it to a thirsty man if his empty cup be of gold or silver or of finest glass? Such outside splendours will not slake his thirst.

Nevertheless in Paul's mind the thought was ever present that Isabel Carnaby would see *Some Better Thing*, and would read as much, perhaps, between the lines as the public could read in them. And—if the truth must be told—this thought gave him more pleasure than all his literary triumph; for, in spite of what had happened, his love for Isabel was as strong as ever, and his hope was not yet dead that some day they two might be brought together again and might bid bygones be bygones. Paul knew that the ideal Isabel whom he had loved was no creature of his own imagination, but the real Isabel as God had intended her to be; he had merely recognized—not im-

aged—the soul of the woman hidden under her somewhat frivolous exterior. He believed that this soul was not extinct, but merely dormant for a time, and he knew that he was the only man who had power to awaken it fully to life again. There was no doubt that Isabel had been cruel as well as wilful; but perhaps he had been too hard and stern for so highly strung a nature as hers; and to those that love much, surely much can be forgiven. Anyhow Isabel had not committed the one crowning offence in his eyes—she had not put another man in his place—and as long as she was still Miss Carnaby, Paul felt there was yet a possible morning of joy to his present night of weeping.

Early in the year Paul went down to Chayford, and was welcomed as a conquering hero. The family at the Cottage were never tired of talking about *Some Better Thing*; but *Shams and Shadows* was only once alluded to, and then by Paul himself.

“Father, do you think that *Shams and Shadows* is now atoned for?” he asked one day.

“My son, we will never speak of *Shams and Shadows* more. Do you think that when the angel led Peter out of prison they talked of the denial; or when Moses stood on the Mount of Transfiguration he was reminded of his disobedience at Meribah? The teaching of modern philosophy is that what is done is done, and what we have written we have written; and that there is no atonement for the deed once accomplished, and no washing out of the handwriting against us. But I have not so learned Christ.”

“Then do you believe that what is done can ever be undone?” asked Paul. “Surely that is impossible.”

“I do not wish to prophesy smooth things,” replied his father, “nor to sprinkle the way of life with rose-water. I know that if a man breaks the laws of

Nature he will be punished to the uttermost, for there is no forgiveness in Nature. I know that if a man breaks the laws of Society he will find neither remission nor mercy, for there is no forgiveness in Society ; but I believe that if a man breaks the law of God his transgression can be taken away as though it had never been, for ' there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared'."

"It is a grand gospel that you preach, father, and seems almost too good to be true."

"Nothing is too good to be true ; the truth is the best of everything."

"I believe that," said Paul ; "but I did not always."

"Before you were afflicted you went astray," answered the minister, "but the word is very nigh you now."

"I hope so."

"The modern gospel of the grandeur of human nature is a hard one," said Mr. Seaton, "and tends rather to exalt the creature than to glorify the Creator. If the great object of life is the formation of our own character, then, I grant you, each action must leave its indelible mark ; but if the great object of life is the glory of God, then, surely, the mistakes of foolish men will not be allowed to cast lasting shadows across the eternal Light."

"You think our ideas are too small."

"Yes, and too personal. The business of our lives is to give glory to God ; and it is of no moment whether we do it by sounding His praises abroad or by keeping His commandments at home. It seems to me that now-a-days men think and talk too much about improving their own characters, and meditate too little upon the perfection of the Divine Character."

"They ought to do the one without leaving the other

undone," said Paul. "I cannot admit that holiness is a substitute for usefulness."

"You and I travel by different roads and our methods are not alike; yet both our ways lead up to Jerusalem, as all roads lead to Rome."

"Yes," replied Paul, "the railways are not laid along the old coachroads, but they bring us to the same places as the coaches did."

"And more quickly, too," added Mr. Seaton. "I must not forget that."

During his stay at Chayford, Paul saw a great deal of Mr. Ford. These two shared many opinions, both political and otherwise, and much enjoyed mutual intercourse.

"I wish you could knock some of your common-sense into Edgar," said Edgar's father one day; "it would be invaluable to him in his political career."

"The inculcation of common-sense is a complicated operation," replied Paul.

"I know it," sighed Michael Ford.

"Does Edgar intend to go into Parliament soon?" Paul asked, as he and Mr. Ford walked down the High Street together.

"I mean him to stand for Chayford at the next election. The sitting member, Halkin, has decided to retire after the present Parliament, and the Liberal executive of Chayford have resolved to accept Edgar in his place as their candidate."

"I suppose it will be a walk-over for Edgar."

"Practically so. Chayford has always returned a Liberal, and a Liberal of the good old school—none of your new-fangled faddists. Besides, Edgar would be sure of the Wesleyan vote solid; no Wesleyan, however Conservative, would vote against one of the Fords of Chayford."

"That is quite true; the Wesleyans are a wonderful people for pulling together."

"What I am afraid of," continued Mr. Ford, "is that Edgar will go in for somewhat extreme measures, instead of jogging along on the good old beaten track. I suppose he would be sure of the seat even if his views were decidedly advanced; but I had rather he had adopted the political creed which satisfied his fathers before him."

"Still our fathers' creeds and our fathers' faiths do not always fit us, Mr. Ford; and I do not believe in equipping ourselves for the battle of life with second-hand weapons and armour, even though they be inherited from our parents. What should you think of a soldier who went to war to-day in the coat of mail worn by his ancestors during the Crusades; or was content to arm himself for the fray with a musket that did good service at Waterloo?"

"I should call him a picturesque fool."

"So should I; I think that it is every man's duty to keep abreast of the time," continued Paul, "whether he be a doctor or a politician. You would not consider a doctor was breaking the fifth commandment because he refused to cure fever by cupping, or smallpox by inoculation; then why should you bring this charge against the politician who has outgrown the Liberalism of the Whigs?"

Mr. Ford shook his head. "You young men always think you know better than the old ones."

"We don't really know better; we only know what is better for us and for our generation. Politicians are 'the faculty' of the State, and it is their business—as it is the doctors' business—to prescribe for the diseases of to-day and not for the diseases of the past century. The medicines which cured the latter will probably have no effect upon the former."

"You mean that each generation has its own difficulties to contend with, and must therefore use its own special methods. There is a good deal in what you say, I must admit."

"Where I disapprove of modern philosophy," continued Paul, "is when it begins to sneer at the teaching of former schools. My argument cuts both ways; if we know our own business better than our fathers, they knew their business better than we do. Each generation understands what is best for itself; and it is just as foolish for us to deride our fathers' methods, as for them to despise ours. Their ways were the ways for yesterday, as ours are the ways for to-day; and the transference of either would be an anachronism."

Mr. Ford nodded. "I see; and I am almost tempted to agree with you."

"But besides the unwisdom of laughing at our fathers' methods, it seems to me such atrociously bad form. If a young man adopts verbatim either the religious or the political creed of his father, I probably shall not agree with him, but I shall respect him as an honourable man, who is just as likely to be right as I am; but if a man sneers at and is ashamed of the things which his father cherished and believed in, I regard that man as a cad and should decline to ask him to dinner."

"There you are quite right; I cannot bear to hear young folks jeering at the old faiths."

"But the worst is when they do it for social reasons, and not from any honest conviction," Paul went on; "it makes me perfectly ill to see men treat their parents as family secrets, because the good old folks do not happen to vote on the side of the aristocracy, or worship according to established form."

"They have an idea that in burying the ancestral

Radicalism and Nonconformity out of sight, they thereby identify themselves with the high-born and orthodox."

"I know they do; just as some men think that to walk up to their business in a pair of riding-breeches, places them socially on a level with a master of hounds."

Mr. Ford enjoyed this joke: he rode to hounds himself, and was a good horseman. "And they forget that cutting oneself off from one's own class does not attach one to a higher class; it merely leaves one without a class at all," he concluded.

"Exactly," agreed Paul; "between heaven and earth, like Mahomet's coffin. I don't of course deny that it is a good thing to be well-born and wealthy. I only say that it is a bad thing to pretend to be so when you are not. I don't deny that it is a good thing to be handsome; but a man had better have a snub nose of his own than an artificial aquiline."

"That is perfectly true."

"I cannot blame people for seeing the humorous side of much that their parents considered wholly serious," added Paul, "nor for laughing—tenderly and among themselves—at old-fashioned forms which they have outgrown; but laughing tenderly and sneering are two very different things. For instance, a man who now-a-days could read such books as *The Fairchild Family* and *Stories from the Church Catechism* without a smile, would be lacking in a sense of humour; but a man who sneered at the underlying godliness thus quaintly embodied, would be deficient in true reverence and spiritual insight."

"Quite so."

"Besides, I cannot understand the indifference to the charm of old association which would permit a man to regard with anything but tenderness the faith in which

he was brought up, however far he might leave it behind in his maturer years. For instance, nothing would induce me to wear boots with elastic-sides; I think they are extremely uncomfortable and unhealthy and unbecoming; nevertheless, I never catch sight of those worn by my mother without being conscious of a wave of tender amusement; and for her sake all women who walk through life in elastic-sided boots are in a measure sacred to me."

Mr. Ford smiled, as he looked at the well-dressed man walking by his side. "Yet you yourself would not buy a pair of boots unless they had patent fasteners and cork soles, and every other invention of modern times."

"Of course I should not: which things are an allegory."

"Eh, dear!" sighed Mr. Ford; "I wish I had a son like you. What a political future I would have mapped out for him!"

"I am afraid I am a person who does not lend himself to mapping-out. I should like to go into political life, I confess; but I fear my politics would not always be your politics, Mr. Ford."

"I think they would, in great issues, and we would leave the trifles to take care of themselves. We are both opportunists, Paul; the only difference between us is the difference between the opportunities of thirty years ago and the opportunities of to-day."

"I think you have hit the nail on the head."

"Why don't you go in for political life yourself?" asked Michael Ford abruptly, quickening his pace.

"Because I can't afford it. I am a poor man, and all my people are poor. I make a fair income by editing *The Pendulum* and writing anonymous articles for a good many of the dailies, but not an income that would allow of anything like a parliamentary career."

"But *Shams and Shadows* and *Some Better Thing* must have brought you in a good deal."

"I have not yet received my royalties on *Some Better Thing*, and I could not touch a penny of the profits of *Shams and Shadows*."

"Now, there, my dear boy, you are wrong, and you must forgive an old friend for telling you so. That *Shams and Shadows* was a false step, I admit; and I am very glad that you have so soon retrieved it by contradicting all its nonsense in *Some Better Thing*; but I consider it a piece of idiotic quixotism to refuse the money that *Shams and Shadows* made."

"I think you must please let me be the judge of that," said Paul quietly.

"But, my good fellow, you are making a mistake, and are acting more like Edgar than like yourself. Throwing away the money which you fairly earned by your very clever if somewhat foolish book, is a piece of gratuitous self-denial which will do no good to anybody."

Paul smiled the smile of the obstinate, and Mr. Ford continued:

"Well, it's extremely silly of you. Now you were right not to publish a second edition of your book—although such an edition might have been of pecuniary advantage to you—because you saw that the book was unsound, and you had ceased to believe in your former teaching. For this I admire and respect you. But I cannot see why you should hesitate to appropriate the proceeds of the copies already sold."

Paul walked on in silence for a few seconds; then he said: "I simply could not do it, and that is the end of it".

"I could have believed Edgar capable of such a piece of folly, but not you," grumbled Mr. Ford.

"I am sorry to make myself disagreeable, but I fear I

am one of the self-opinionated people who think they know their own business best."

"And I suppose you won't tell me what you mean to do with the sacrificial proceeds of your first book. You cannot leave them with the publishers. I don't know what your royalty on *Shams and Shadows* was; but, however small, you must do something with it." Mr. Ford spoke with irritation, for he was a man of business.

"You think I am bound to accept the minor profits, you mean. My father has a great sermon on that subject—but he spells it 'with a difference'."

"A poor joke is no substitute for a plain answer, Paul."

"Do you remember the lady who was afraid she had asked an indiscreet question of Talleyrand, and was told that a question is never indiscreet but an answer may be?"

"You have not yet outgrown your quixotism, I see, my dear boy."

"Not I; and I happen to be suffering from a pretty sharp attack of it just now, brought on, I suppose, by fine weather and flattery judiciously blended. So you must bear with my youthful follies."

"I could bear with a great deal from such a clever man as that," said Mr. Ford to himself, after he had parted from Paul. "He'll make a name in the world which men will remember; and that Carnaby girl was a fool to throw up her chance of bearing it!"

So gradually peace—and something akin to happiness—"slid into the soul" of Paul Seaton. In spite of all that had happened, he believed that Isabel—in her heart of hearts—really cared for him, and that he was the only man who could completely satisfy her; and he knew beyond

a doubt that she was the only woman who could ever satisfy him. Surely it would all come right in the end, he thought; it was against every principle of political economy that so much mutual devotion should be wasted.

To all other women he was utterly indifferent; and this indifference was so patent to the eyes of Alice Martin that she soon ceased to wear her best hat when there was a chance of meeting him. Best hats, like horses, require regular air and exercise; and when they are no longer needed for the driving of one particular man to distraction, they are not infrequently used to convey another in the same direction. Thus it came to pass that Alice began to put on her best hat when there was a possibility of seeing (or rather of being seen by) Edgar Ford. Of course Edgar did not know what had happened; he only thought that Alice seemed to grow prettier every day. But this is a not uncommon delusion of Edgar's sex. They think that a particular girl is growing decidedly better looking; but it does not always strike them that the increase of beauty is due to the fact that this particular girl has begun to put on her best clothes whenever there is an off-chance of meeting with them.

"Here is something that ought to delight you," said Mr. Seaton, handing the newspaper to Paul one day. "The Minister of Education has been delivering an inaugural address for some literary society, and he has quoted your new book as the wisest book that has been published during the last ten years. He considers that the political part of it ought to be used as a text-book for budding politicians; and he foretells a brilliant political as well as literary career for the author."

"Well played, old Willoughby!" exclaimed Paul. "I

once met him at the Esdailes', and found him a very decent fellow then; but this proves him to be possessed of almost supernatural powers of insight and foresight. Give me the paper and let me read my praise and glory for myself."

"It will make you vain," said Joanna.

"You'd be vain if Cabinet Ministers grovelled before you," retorted her brother.

"I know I should. Nobody ever grovelled before me; but it would make me vain if an infant did, let alone a pillar of the State."

Paul's face fairly beamed. "I'm awfully glad that Willoughby approved of my views on education."

"Your next book had better touch on all matters connected with the State," suggested Joanna; "you might have a chapter on sanitation, for the President of the Local Government Board to lecture upon; and a chapter on commerce, for the President of the Board of Trade to lecture upon; so that, like freedom, you might 'slowly broaden down from president to president'."

"How rude you are!" exclaimed Paul; "you don't deserve to have a great author for a brother—you really don't. I take a broad view of the fifth commandment, and I think that it includes respect to brothers as well as to parents."

Joanna shook her head. "You are always too broad in your views; that is your great fault. The Bible thoroughly understands human nature, and never commands the impossible. Therefore, it tells us to love our brother, but it never suggests or hints at such a thing as respect for him."

Then she and her father started for a walk, and Paul sat down to enjoy Mr. Willoughby's lecture, and to dream over the glorious possibilities that it opened up. It was a

great compliment, and Paul was the last man to pretend that he was not delighted when he was.

After he had read the report of the lecture, his eye wandered idly over the rest of the paper till it was suddenly arrested by the following paragraph :—

A marriage is arranged, and will shortly take place, between Lord Wrexham, and Isabel, only daughter of the late Major Carnaby, and niece of Sir Benjamin Farley, G.C.B.

CHAPTER XVII.

Vernacre Park.

Trim the shrubs and mow the grass,
Roll the alleys shady,
Make the ways where she will pass
Fitter for my lady.

THERE was a large house-party at Vernacre Park at Easter, to meet Miss Carnaby, who had just become engaged to the host, Lord Wrexham.

Old Lady Wrexham played the part of hostess—a most stately and chilly dame, whom Isabel could not endure; and, in addition to the party from Elton, the company included the Esdailes, Lord Robert Thistle-town and Mr. Madderley, besides sundry uneventful persons, whom nobody took the trouble to differentiate.

Isabel had been in a most reckless mood ever since she accepted Lord Wrexham; she had definitely decided to stifle the romantic, and to develop the worldly, side of her character; and—having made up her mind to permanently adopt the *rôle* of a shallow smart woman—she almost overdid her part in her anxiety to do herself injustice. It certainly was a triumphal procession for her, this visit to Vernacre as its future mistress; for Vernacre was one of the finest residences in the Midlands.

As they were sitting at lunch on Good Friday, Lady
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Esdaile remarked: "Isn't it funny how hungry going to church always makes one?"

"I never have recourse to those artificial aids to appetite," murmured Madderley.

"I'm always ravenous on Sundays," continued Lady Esdaile, "and my appetite has evidently mistaken to-day for a Sunday."

"A pardonable error," replied the artist; "for my intellectual powers have fallen into it, too."

"I am glad that you are hungry, Lady Esdaile," said the hostess, "but not surprised, for Vernacre is always considered a peculiarly invigorating place; the situation is salubrious, and the subsoil old red sandstone. I never feel so well anywhere as I do at Vernacre."

"I am always hungry in the country and thirsty in London," continued Lady Esdaile; "and that is why I am so much sorrier for poor people in the country than in town; it must be so horrid to feel hungry and have nothing to eat, don't you know?"

"It must indeed," agreed Lord Wrexham; "and I have often wondered that the health of the lower classes is not even more seriously impaired than it is, considering that they must frequently be compelled to leave their hunger only partially satisfied, if at all."

"I daresay they enjoy it," exclaimed Isabel; "I remember that Aunt Caroline and I were once kept stuck on a journey for hours, far away from any station, and we had nothing to eat or drink save a small bottle of cough-syrup she happened to have in her dressing-bag. We had to take occasional nips at that; and because it was scarce we thought it delicious. I never was addicted to cough-syrup before, but since then I have preferred it to champagne."

"Perhaps it was made palatable on purpose," sug-

gested Lord Wrexham ; "some of those patent medicines are often far from repulsive to the taste."

"Oh! no; it was nasty enough really," replied Isabel ; "but poverty made it sweet. And I believe poor people get lots of treats like that."

Lord Wrexham shook his head. "I fear you are right, and that the poor are too fond of taking quack doses not recommended by the faculty. It is a bad habit, but I presume that economy is their motive."

"I didn't mean that; I only meant that when you are poor, life must be like one everlasting picnic. I once wanted to be poor myself, I thought it would be such fun."

"I once *was* poor," said Madderley; "and I am bound to admit that the joke fell short of your expectations, Miss Carnaby."

Isabel helped herself to plovers' eggs. "I felt I was foolish at the time, and I prayed for more wisdom."

"It is always safe to pray for the inevitable," said the artist; "it strengthens faith without incommoding Providence."

"Having got wisdom, I now pray for the rest of life's good things, like Solomon—riches and honours and fine clothes, and horses and carriages *en suite*."

"I never pray for what I see in the shop-windows," said Madderley; "I choose what I think will suit me, and know that it will be put down in my bill."

Isabel's lip curled. "You are very *bourgeois* in your ideas."

"I don't think so; I am merely honest with myself, and do not call transactions providential which are merely commercial. The temple and the money-changers should be kept far apart."

"I think, Madderley, that you misunderstand Miss

Carnaby," said Lord Wrexham, in his slow, kind way as he smiled indulgently upon Isabel; "she does not really mean that she would ask Providence for things with which her tradesman could supply her."

"Of course I shouldn't pray for what I could pay for," added Isabel.

The artist bowed. "If I have misunderstood Miss Carnaby I humbly beg her pardon. By the way," he continued, "I once heard a story of a very devout Cornish wrecker, who never retired to rest without praying for a storm. That always appeals to my sense of humour."

"Were his prayers answered?" asked Isabel.

"There were always plenty of wrecks, if that is what you mean."

"The wreckers were a terrible people," said Lord Wrexham; "and it was a terrible state of society which made such things possible."

"It is a comfort to think that these customs were confined to Cornwall and the last century," said Isabel.

"Were they?" asked Madderley.

"I think so," replied Lord Wrexham; "of course one has heard of wrecks and salvage on other shores; but I believe that the custom of deliberately causing wrecks by means of false lights was peculiar to Cornwall."

"I hope you are right," said the artist; "I cannot, of course, give names or dates, but I have an idea that I have heard of cases of cruel and avoidable wrecks in other counties than Cornwall, and considerably later than the last century."

"Indeed! I had believed that such savagery was extinct in England. I suppose, however, that the love of gain was the motive now as then?" And his lordship looked quite distressed.

"And the love of excitement."

"Dear me, how shocking!"

"Such things are shocking," agreed Madderley; "and doubly shocking to those who have witnessed their effects."

Isabel laughed a hard little laugh. "Perhaps Mr. Madderley will make use of his artistic power to describe some of these harrowing spectacles."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, dear lady; such descriptions would not be fit for pretty ears. I believe even the wreckers themselves would rather not see the consequences of their cruelty; therefore such things should be kept from the knowledge of refined and tender-hearted women, whose nature it is to be kind and pitiful."

"You are quite right, Madderley," said Lord Wrexham approvingly; "descriptions of horrors and cruelties are most unfit for women's ears, in my opinion."

But Isabel still looked defiant. "Perhaps, then, Mr. Madderley will tell us where these modern and fiendish wreckers are to be found."

The artist strolled to the sideboard to cut himself some ham. "On the sea-coast of Bohemia, and thereabouts."

"Don't take any notice of him, Wrexham," said Isabel petulantly; "he is only making up, just to irritate me."

Lord Wrexham was surprised. "Why, Isabel, what is the matter with you? You and Madderley used to be such friends."

"I know we used; but friendships don't wear for ever, any more than clothes."

"I have always noticed," remarked Madderley, "that the untried friendships are those which last the longest."

"What is that you are saying about friendships?"

cried Lord Bobby from the other end of the table. The place of honour, to which his rank entitled him, was a grievous burden to this irrepressible youth. "I can give you no end of information on the subject, as Platonic friendship is the line in which I excel."

"I do not believe in Platonic friendships," said Lady Farley; "the woman is all right; but the man always cares too much or too little for the arrangement to be a success."

"You are wrong," cried Lord Bobby; "I have scores in good working order just now, so I speak with authority on the subject. They are all most successful, and I start a new one every other week."

"Which I suppose you call a neo-Platonic friendship," suggested the artist.

"Don't be so horribly clever," replied Lord Bobby, "it gives me the headache, and will undermine your constitution in time."

"My experience of Platonic friendships is that they generally end in the woman's losing her head," remarked Madderley.

"Mine is that they invariably end in the man's losing his temper," added Isabel.

"I notice that, as a rule, the man is either bored to death by the whole thing," said Lady Farley, "or else overdraws his account on the bank of friendship, and is surprised when, in consequence, the bank will not cash his cheques."

"That latter case is more often true of the woman than of the man, I think," replied Madderley.

Lady Farley shook her head. "No; men are much more exacting than women in their friendships—that is to say, if they really care. It seems to me that men either care a great deal about things, or not at all; while women

have a regular thermometer of degrees of affection and interest."

"I think you are right there," agreed Lord Wrexham, 'men are so much simpler and less complex than women.'

"Oh! we are grander altogether," agreed Lord Bobby; "simpler and yet more sublime, don't you know? One cannot help admiring us.

Though on our corns the little spitfires tread,
Tobacco-smoke unruffled crowns our head."

Everybody laughed, and Lady Farley continued: "I have studied men carefully for many years, and I feel that I am now qualified to carry on a satisfactory Platonic friendship. But of course, being married, I have not time or inclination for the thing; soldiers don't run out of a battle to try their skill at a shooting-range—they have heavier work on hand."

Sir Benjamin chuckled with delight. "Still, my dear, you can give these young and single persons some of the benefit of your superior wisdom, can't you?"

"Tell us how you would carry on a Platonic friendship, Aunt Caroline," said Violet Esdaile.

"Well, in the first place, I should never argue with a man; men hate it so, and it does no earthly good. In my young days I naturally used to endeavour to prove I was right when I knew I was; but now, when a man puts me straight as to facts of which he is absolutely ignorant, I merely accept his correction, and say I must have been misinformed. Of course I know all the time that I am right and he is wrong, but what does that matter? It is a woman's duty to be socially attractive—not statistically correct."

"And what else should you do, Lady Farley?" asked her host.

"I should never attempt to amend his anecdotes. This is an unpardonable sin. I have known homes broken up and lifelong friendships destroyed, by one person's saying that a thing happened on Thursday, when the *raconteur* had said Friday; while quarrels to which there could be no reconciliation have ensued from a difference of opinion as to whether A. met B. by the 10-20 or the 10-45 train."

"Lady Farley has studied men to some purpose," said Madderley.

The lady smiled. "There is such a thing as compulsory education."

"Caroline is quite right," agreed Lady Esdaile, "it is never any use arguing with a man. In the first place he is always sure to know better than you do."

"That was not my reason for objecting to the habit," murmured Lady Farley.

"But he always is—that is, if it is anything out of books or newspapers. Of course clothes are a different thing, and there I should be very careful about trusting a man's taste too far. At least their taste is right enough, but they seem to have no proper regard for fashion."

"Perhaps now that Aunt Caroline has taught us how to adapt ourselves to men, Mr. Madderley will teach us how to adapt ourselves to women," suggested Isabel; "for I believe he prides himself on his profound knowledge of, and contempt for, the sex."

"With pleasure. Whenever I am dealing with ladies I take as my guide and watchword the legend painted upon the racks of railway carriages: 'These racks are suited for light articles only, and must not be used for heavy luggage;' and I find this is a most successful prescription. For 'light articles' one must read,

pleasure, luxury, admiration, amusement, etc. ; and for 'heavy luggage,' sickness, sorrow, love, poverty, and every other adversity."

"I see," said Isabel.

"I once knew a man who put his heavy luggage in the rack, in spite of the printed warning," said the artist, "and it fell through and broke his head ; I knew another man who made a similar mistake in dealing with a lady ; the consequences were practically the same, only it was his heart instead of his head that was broken."

Isabel's eyes flashed. "I am afraid your friends are not as wise as you are."

"Perhaps not ; but I am hoping that they will learn wisdom by experience."

"Now where I find men so difficult as friends," said Isabel, "is that they never will tell you *why* they are vexed. When a man is out of temper there is no secret about it—he who runs may read, and she who reads had better run away ; but the reason for this vexation is kept a profound secret."

"You are quite right there," agreed Lady Farley ; "it is an interesting but inexplicable fact. A woman is different ; she will probably not show at all that she is annoyed, but if she shows it she will tell you the why and the wherefore."

"That is quite true ; my experience of the sex is that when they are angry they do not err on the side of want of frankness," sighed Lord Robert.

"And then men are so jealous and exacting," continued Isabel ; "that is where they disgust me."

The artist looked at Isabel curiously, as if by the outward eye he could discover whether she were as heartless as she pretended to be ; but her appearance afforded him no clue to the problem. "A man who

irritates a woman by showing his jealousy, and destroys her pleasure by such evil tempers, is a fool—and worse than a fool,” he said.

“Oh! not worse than a fool.”

“You are pleased to be merciful, Miss Carnaby.”

“Because there is nothing worse,” she added.

“I quite agree with you,” said Madderley; “but some men seem to regard all things as patent or copyright, which is manifestly absurd; and men in love are worse in this respect than Platonic friends.”

Isabel went on with her lunch while the artist continued: “If a clergyman or a doctor is not able—owing to absence or illness—to do his work, he supplies a *locum tenens* to take his place. And he is grateful to—instead of offended with—the latter for so doing. Then why cannot a lover pursue the same course, and with the same ‘sweet reasonableness,’ I want to know?”

“The cases hardly seem to me parallel,” said Lord Wrexham, looking puzzled.

“Of course it doesn’t do to press a metaphor too far,” assented Madderley.

“Another absurd thing about men,” Isabel went on, “is that they expect you to like them because they are kind to you, and do what you want; while what you really like them for is the trick of their manner or the colour of their hair.”

“I think you are in a minority there, my dear Isabel,” said Lady Farley; “as a rule kindness appeals more to a woman than anything. I believe any man could make any woman love him, if he were only kind enough long enough.”

“People like us for what we do, and love us for what we are,” interpolated Sir Benjamin; “that is my experience.”

"I know," agreed Isabel; "therefore we can make people like us but we cannot make them love us."

"That is true of a woman," said Lady Farley, helping herself to strawberries; "but hardly of a man. I still hold that any man can win a woman's love through kindness; and I also hold that external roughness of manner will—in a woman's eyes—counteract the effect of any amount of secret devotion. When all is said and done, we like the men who will dance with us better than the men who would die for us; such is the constitution of the normal female mind."

Isabel tossed her head. "I do not think so."

"But surely you like the people who are kind to you, don't you?" asked her host.

"No; I like people because they are attractive, not because they are kind. I always pity children when they have to kiss grown-ups who have given them presents. If I were a child, I should not want to kiss the lady who had given me the prettiest present, but the lady who had the prettiest face."

"But children are taught to show forth their gratitude not only in their lives but with their lips," suggested the artist.

"It is a senseless plan all the same," laughed Isabel; "I couldn't bear to think that my friends liked me only because I was kind to them."

"I do not think you need distress yourself on that score, dear lady."

"I want people to like me because I am attractive in myself—not because I am amiable."

Mr. Madderley shook his head. "I cannot commend your prudence; for you will probably cease to be attractive when you are about five-and-forty, while you can go on being amiable until you are eighty-nine."

"I don't see that; hundreds of women are attractive long after they are five-and-forty."

"Of course they are; but they generally belong to the plump and amiable school. Tongue is not a dish which improves by keeping, my dear Lady Disdain."

"Wrexham, turn him out of the room, at once," cried Isabel; "he is becoming insufferable!"

"What did he say? I did not hear," inquired the host, who was feeding his dogs at that particular moment.

"He says my tongue is too sharp."

"And he isn't far wrong," sang out Lord Bobby; "if you don't take care you'll be stung to death by your own tongue, like the crocodile or the scorpion or some other old chappie. You should have seen a girl I took in to dinner last week; all through dinner she kept saying, 'Oh, Lord Bobby, how clever you are!' And she never said anything else. Now that is the sort of conversation that men like; it is far better than the dizzying, fizzying stuff that brilliant women treat us to."

"Don't you like the girls whom you think clever?" asked Violet.

"I like the girls who think me clever a long sight better; and I don't believe that this is by any means a peculiar taste."

"Young people think and talk too much about what they like and dislike," said Lady Wrexham, rising from the table; "when I was a girl I knew what people were related to each other, and which families were old and which new; but I did not bother my head about who was attractive and who was amiable and who was neither."

"If you have nothing special to do this afternoon, Thistletown," said Lord Wrexham, "I wish you would drive Madderley in the dog-cart to Sunny Hill; I particularly want him to see the view from there, it is

such a fine one and also so typical of this part of the country."

"I could have better shared a better plan," replied Bobby; "but my obliging nature cannot say him nay."

"You can upset him and break all his bones for being so rude to me at lunch," suggested Isabel.

"That would do him no good. You may break, you may shatter his bones if you will, but the outward signs of an overweening vanity and a most unlovable disposition will cling to him still."

Then the party dispersed, and Isabel went with her lover to see some model cottages which he had just built, and which he was particularly anxious to show to her. She listened patiently while he explained all the improvements, and then she said: "I wonder if happiness is to be found in such things as subsoils and artesian wells".

Lord Wrexham looked at his cottages with satisfaction. "Health is to be found in them, and health is a constituent part of happiness."

"Perhaps; of course you couldn't be happy without being healthy; but it doesn't follow that you couldn't be healthy without being happy. I wonder in what happiness really does lie."

"I don't know; I never thought about it."

"But you should think about such things, my dear Wrexham; it is stupid of you not to, you know."

"But I cannot analyze my feelings, as you do; I am not an introspective person."

"I find nothing so interesting as the study of myself," said Isabel.

"That is very likely; but you are an interesting person and I am not; so the analysis of me would prove a most wearisome experiment."

"That has nothing to do with it. The analysis of

me is instructive only so far as I am normal, and therefore uninteresting. It shows what human nature is like. When I am original I cease to be interesting from a scientific point of view."

"I am afraid I don't quite follow you."

"Can't you see that in vivisectioning a frog, the more common the frog the more instructive is the experiment?"

"Yes; I can see that."

"Then the same principle applies to a woman. But do you mean to tell me you never think about your feelings?" asked Isabel.

"No; I feel them, and that is enough for me."

"That is very tame!"

"You see," explained Lord Wrexham, "I have so many other things to think about. An estate like this requires a good deal of management, and I am so anxious to do my duty by all my tenants and workpeople."

"Do you get really interested in the people about the place, and want to know what they are all thinking and feeling and caring about?"

"Of course not, my dear young lady; but I want them to be comfortable and prosperous, and to regard me as a satisfactory landowner."

They walked on in silence for a short time, and then Isabel said: "Isn't it funny how some people make everything into a treat by just being there?"

"I don't quite understand what you mean, my dearest."

"Don't you know how the mere presence of some people will turn a stuffy little parlour into a fairy palace, and a dusty street into a byway of Paradise?"

"Surely that is somewhat extravagant language," replied Lord Wrexham; "of course I know that some sorts of society are much more congenial than others, but everybody can see that."

"Do you know what it is to feel that life is made up of a lot of strange questions and problems and desires, and that one person is the answer to them all?" persisted Isabel.

"My dearest child, what funny ideas you have! I am afraid that you read too much poetry and fiction, and that it overexcites your brain."

"Oh! I don't read all that in books," replied Isabel scornfully. "I know it of myself; and, by the way, how many selves have you got?"

"How many selves? Why, only one, of course."

"Well, that is very one-sided of you! Now there are five of me, all neatly labelled and scheduled."

"Which are they, I should like to know?" inquired Lord Wrexham.

"Oh! there is my very best ideal self, and my brilliant society self, and my jolly every-day self, and my ill and unhappy self, and the demon."

"What ever do you mean by the demon?"

"I mean me, when I am shallow and selfish and worldly, and say nasty, sharp things, and care for nothing but admiration, and am a regular wretch all round."

"What is the best self like?"

"She learned that the wisdom of this world is foolishness," replied Isabel dreamily, "and she found the key to life's Holy of Holies. Therefore I killed her, because she knew too much. You never met her, and I have forgotten her, for it is nearly two years since she died."

"Really, Isabel, you are a little too prone to let your imagination run away with you. But now I want you to look at this rustic fencing; it is an idea of my own, and is, I think, most effective."

"Oh! it is pretty enough," replied Isabel indifferently. Lord Wrexham's face fell. "I am so sorry you are

not more pleased with it, my darling ; I designed it for you, and I did so hope that it would give you pleasure.. Is there anything about it you would like different ? ”

“ Oh ! no ; it is all right.”

“ You see, all my delight now in improving Vernacre is in making it fitter for you. It could never be worthy of such a mistress as it will have ; but I hardly let a day pass without doing something to make it a little more meet for your acceptance.”

“ It is very good of you,” said Isabel gently, as they turned away.

“ Not at all ; it is mere selfishness on my part, as my greatest pleasure lies in pleasing you. I trust you will not hesitate to mention anything that you would like different, either in my home or in myself ; and, if alteration is possible, it shall be made.”

“ Do you mean you would let me tell you of your faults ? ”

“ Of course I would,” replied Lord Wrexham ; “ and, what is more, I would try to correct them.”

“ I once invented a game where every member of the company was told of one fault by the rest of the party unanimously, on condition he or she promised to amend it and not to be offended.”

Lord Wrexham opened a gate leading into the park.
“ Was it a successful pastime ? ”

“ It ought to have been, but somehow it wasn’t. It led to strained relations all round, and yet nobody seemed to have a fault the less in consequence. Now, I played it in the proper spirit, and I cured two bad faults of my own.”

“ It was very impertinent of anybody to dare to tell you of your faults, Isabel ; and if I had been there I would have told them so.”

"No; it wasn't at all impertinent; it was only part of the game. I forget what my faults were," continued Isabel musingly, "but I know I cured them both."

"I wish you would play that game with me, and tell me where you would like me to be different," said Lord Wrexham rather wistfully. "I know I am stupid, and not quick at understanding things, but that seems more a misfortune than a fault; at any rate I don't get over it, and no one but myself knows how hard I try. But anything that I could alter, I gladly would, to make life with me less dull for you, my dear."

"You haven't any faults, Wrexham; not a single one."

Lord Wrexham smiled with pleasure.

"But your virtues are rather overcrowded, like the shrubs at Elton," continued Isabel, "and would be all the better for a little thinning out."

Lord Wrexham's smile faded. Isabel had a nasty trick of wiping the smiles clean off the faces of those that loved her too much. However, when she saw that she had hurt her lover, she was seized with compunction, and began to make amends.

"I say, Wrexham, what is that funny little windmill for at the foot of the hill?" She knew well enough what it was for before she asked, but she also knew that Lord Wrexham would delight in explaining it.

His face brightened at once. "It is a new arrangement for pumping water up to the house. You see, Isabel, we have hitherto drunk the water from a well in the courtyard, which did quite nicely for us. But when I found that you were coming to live at Vernacre I had it analyzed; and discovered that, although there was nothing much amiss with it, it was not quite so pure as the water from a spring at the foot of that hill. So, by means of a most ingenious arrangement, the wind pumps all

the drinking water for the house up from that one spring, which I have proved is the purest water on the estate."

"How good you are to me, my dear old boy!"

"I want you to have the best of everything, and I mean to give it you as far as I can. But I should like to explain the mechanism of this arrangement to you, Isabel. It is a most clever contrivance, I think, and repays examination."

So Isabel listened patiently while her lover expounded to her how the wind turned the wheel which pumped the water up to the house, so that much work was accomplished by means of a very little outlay.

"You are so awfully clever at things of this kind," she said, as they strolled homewards; "I am sure you have literally more brains in your little finger than most men have in their stupid heads."

"I have not many brains anywhere, I am afraid; but as I am always thinking about you and wondering what I can do for your comfort and pleasure, I should indeed be a poor fool if I did not hit upon the right thing sometimes." And Lord Wrexham sighed.

"You very often hit upon the right thing. I don't think you have any idea what a comfort you are to me, Wrexham. When my head and heart are tired out they always come back to you, as if you were a patent soothing syrup or a provision for old age. I call you my 'rest cure'."

"I am thankful if I bring you any happiness, my child, in return for the abundant measure you have bestowed upon me in promising to be my wife; yet I am but a dull companion for such a brilliant young creature as yourself. However, when you come to Vernacre for good, we will always have the house full of young people, so that you will never have time to be bored by your slow old coach of a husband."

"You are not a slow old coach," cried Isabel indignantly; "you are the best and dearest man in the whole world!"

"Am I?—well, it is heaven to me to hear you say so, whether you really think it or not. Not that I mean you would ever say what you did not know to be true; but you are sometimes carried away by your warm feelings to say things which exceed the convictions of your cooler moments."

"I know I am," replied Isabel, "but I always try to be frank and truthful."

Her lover smiled rather sadly. "My dear, it is very noble of you to be so transparent, and never to pretend you care more for me than you really do; and my rational side commends and admires this uprightness. But now and then I am weak enough to wish that you would let me deceive myself a little, and not be so conscientious in your desire to enlighten me. A fool's paradise may be a poor thing; but it is better than no paradise at all."

Isabel's eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Wrexham, how horrid I must have been to you!"

"Never horrid to me, Isabel—never anything but charming and fascinating and altogether delightful. It is I who am to blame for being somewhat tiresome and exacting. Oh! my dear, do you think I don't know how dull and stupid I am, and how tired you must sometimes feel of my society? Yet I am such an old fool that I like to pretend to myself that I am to you in some measure what you are to me, though I know perfectly well all the time that such an idea is absurd and impossible in the extreme."

"What is it in me that makes you like me so much?" asked Isabel abruptly, as they were watching the sun set behind the distant hills.

"No special thing; I love the whole of you, and your faults as well as your virtues."

"But don't you like me better in some moods than in others?"

"I don't think so; I always love you just the same; whatever you do or say, you are you, and that is enough for me."

"But doesn't it make any difference when I am nasty to you?" persisted Isabel.

"It makes all the difference between happiness and misery, but it does not make any difference in my love for you."

"You are a good man, Wrexham!"

"My dear, there is no goodness or badness in it. I am simply made like that, and I cannot help it."

"Nevertheless, you are perfect, whether it is your own doing or Nature's."

"If I were ten times better than I am, I should still not be half good enough for you."

"You'd always take my part, whoever I quarrelled with, wouldn't you?" coaxed Isabel, sticking a primrose, she had just gathered, into her lover's button-hole.

"Always."

"Even if I were wrong?"

"Exactly the same whether you were wrong or whether you were right; the merits of the case would have no effect upon me."

Isabel patted his arm. "Now that is what I call real justice. It is qualities such as this that make women love and respect men."

Lord Wrexham laughed, and then said: "Here we are at the peach-house. I want you to come and see some improvements I have just carried out in the stove, which I think will ensure our getting twice as

many peaches as we have ever had out of this house before."

Whereupon his lordship plunged into a minute description of the methods whereby his peaches were to be prematurely ripened, and Isabel gave him her most satisfying attention.

When the walk was over, Isabel went to her own room and looked at herself in the glass. "Miss Carnaby," she said, "you are not really a handsome woman, and Fate has given you far more than you deserve. In exchange for a pretty wit and an indifferent face and a most admirable figure, you will receive a coronet and twenty thousand a year, with the best husband in the world thrown in as a perquisite, like a present of books with so many pounds of tea. So the least you can do for the next forty years is to talk pleasantly and intelligently about windmills and peach-houses and such like interesting subjects, remembering that—if you'd had your own foolish way—you might instead have been living upon a few paltry hundreds a year, with a jealous and bad-tempered young man who couldn't keep a civil tongue in his head for two days together."

For the rest of the Easter recess Isabel made herself specially charming to her host. She was flattered and petted on all sides, and he was the cause of it, so she felt accordingly grateful. The praise which is always accorded to the woman who doeth well to herself was hers in full measure just then; and it put her in a good humour with herself and with her world. She tried her utmost not to be bored when Wrexham talked to her about the things in which he was interested, and she succeeded, in so far as she hid her boredom from everybody in the house except herself and him; but, clever as she was, she was not quite clever enough for that.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A State Concert.

Rank and wealth I pass unheeding,
Never giving them their due,
For my heart and soul are needing
Nothing in the world but you.

"**A**S I have often remarked," said Isabel one hot June morning, as she and Lady Farley were sitting together in the latter's boudoir, "the world—as the world—has nothing better to offer than a State Concert."

"I agree with you," replied her aunt; "it combines the charms of a religious service and a smart party, and has the advantages of both with the disadvantages of neither."

"The music is always good—so are the dresses and the diamonds—and the Palace is the coolest place in London."

"Quite true," said Lady Farley; "and what more can the heart and flesh of fashionable woman desire?"

"Several things. For instance, my cup of happiness will not overflow till I have a diamond tiara. Now there you have the advantage of me."

"But you cannot have a tiara without having a husband as well; and there you have the advantage of me."

"I shall not have the advantage of you long." And Isabel laughed.

"No; but you will then have the tiara in place of the advantage."

"One of my chief reasons in getting married is to secure to myself the right of wearing a tiara," remarked Isabel; "I consider that a woman of thirty without a tiara is as indecent as a woman of ninety without a cap. Women must be crowned with either youth or diamonds, or else must hide their diminished heads under the cloak of religion, and retire into nunneries and sisterhoods."

"My dear, you are too sarcastic for so young a person; no unmarried woman should ever say nasty things—unless she is a professional beauty. Still, I hope you will enjoy the Concert to-night, in spite of the shame of your uncovered head."

"I am thankful it is a Concert and not a Ball. If it were a Ball, I should have to talk to Wrexham all evening; but now I can keep silence, and let the dear man feast his eyes upon the beauties of my irregular profile, instead of feasting his ears upon the charms of my still more irregular conversation."

"Then poor Wrexham will come badly off to-night," said Lady Farley; "for your conversation is infinitely superior to your profile, my dear."

"I know it is; but I wish you would not tread upon my toes—or, more correctly, upon my nose—so ruthlessly. It is simply fiendish to throw a woman's nose in her teeth in that fashion."

"Poor Isabel!"

"I always envy the women with good noses more than I can express," continued Miss Carnaby, leaning back in her chair and gazing thoughtfully up to the ceiling: "eyes grow dim and teeth depart and figures increase, but a good nose is an abiding resting-place for your vanity. You know that it will last out your time,

whatever happens; and that age cannot wither nor custom stale its satisfactory proportions."

"That is so," agreed Lady Farley, tenderly stroking her own perfect little aquiline.

"I always wonder how the women with pretty noses carry on their advertizing department. Of course, when we have good eyes, we call attention to the same by making use of eye service as men pleasers, so to speak; and when we have good teeth, we smile as often as is compatible with the reputation for sanity, and we frequently complain of the toothache."

"Oh! is that your plan of campaign? I have often wondered how teeth as white as yours are can ache as much as you say they do; but now I understand it is only a ruse."

"You misjudge me there, Aunt Caroline. I know my teeth are pretty, but they are merely little devils disguised as angels of light, for I have inherited an estate of fine and extensive achers. But you haven't yet informed me how the well-nosed women call attention to their stock in trade."

"My dear, when a thing is as plain as the nose on your face it does not require any advertisement, according to proverbial philosophy."

"It is not when it is plain that the necessity arises," continued Isabel; "but only when it is pretty."

"How absurd you are! Do you talk to Lord Wrexham like this?"

"Good gracious! no; he would think I was out of my mind, and would recommend some new German baths or other, which the faculty had discovered as the latest cure for insanity; and then he would carefully explain to me the chemical action of the waters upon the tissue of the human brain."

"You really are too bad, Isabel!" said Lady Farley severely; "Lord Wrexham is a peer, and one of the best matches in London; and yet you treat him as badly as if you were marrying him for love. It is very incorrect and improvident of you."

Isabel opened her blue eyes very wide. "You don't have to make love to him for three hours and more at a stretch, or you would not talk about him in that careless and happy way. I confess that the excellent man's wealth and rank and virtue are unequalled—save, perhaps, by his dulness; but, believe me, there is only one thing on earth more fatiguing than talking to Wrexham, and that is listening to him. Take this as a wrinkle from one who knows."

"You should adapt yourself to him, my dear; it does not do for a man to know that a woman is cleverer than he is."

"He doesn't know it; I do, but I have never let him find it out. And as for adapting myself—why, my dear aunt, if you heard me talk to him you would take me for a land-agent or a farm-labourer."

"Hardly," said Lady Farley, who was lazily looking through her list of engagements for the day.

"Yes, you would. Personally I prefer talking about hearts and souls and ideals, to discussing silos and reaping-machines and land-bills; but Wrexham dotes upon the latter, so on the latter does my nimble tongue run. Adaptability is my strong point, don't you know?"

"And your weak point too, my child. You are so exactly what people want you to be, that nobody knows what the real *you* is like."

"Ah! but *I* know, more's the pity!"

"Then you know more than I do."

"Yes, I am wonderfully adaptable; in fact I have re-

duced adaptability to a science ; I always make myself five years younger and one degree less intelligent than the man who takes me in to dinner ; that is why I am so popular."

"It is the popular women who make shipwreck of their lives, and the unpopular ones who sail safely into pleasant havens. My experience is that the attractive women get the nice little things, and the unattractive ones the nice big things in this world." And Lady Farley sighed, as she sat down to answer invitations.

"I know," said Isabel, rising from her chair and strolling doorwards ; "the latter, out of sheer gratitude, marry the first man that asks them, and spend the rest of their lives in returning thanks for his kind inquiry."

That night Isabel went with her uncle and aunt to the State Concert. The scene was as brilliant as usual, with the gay dresses and uniforms—with the daïs for Royalty at one end of the great saloon, and the musicians' gallery at the other, the intervening space being filled up with the cream of English society.

"I say," cried Lord Robert Thistletown, plumping himself down beside them as soon as they had taken their seats, "there will be a sound of revelry this night without a doubt ; for I see a chorus out of one of old Wagner's things down on the programme, and he is the best chap for making a row I ever came across."

"You should not speak disrespectfully of Wagner," corrected Isabel ; "he is one of the greatest composers—as I am one of the greatest conversationalists—of the age."

"I am not disrespectful ; I only think that, compared with you and Wagner, the rest of the world is silence."

"I see it is the *Chorus of Flower Maidens* out of *Parsifal*," remarked Isabel.

"I suppose all those young women in white are the maidens; but which are the flowers, I wonder?"

"Yourself, my dear young friend; you are the flower of the English aristocracy, don't you know?"

"Of course I am. Yet sometimes I forget that I am a flower, and behave like a stinging nettle. That is when the brilliancy of my wit outruns the benevolence of my heart."

"If you lightly touch a nettle——" Isabel began.

"Exactly so; you have hit the nail on the head, most wise young woman. It is only when you trifle with me that I become dangerous; 'grasp me like a man of mettle,' and you will find that the tighter you squeeze me the more affectionate shall I become."

"I wonder if 'a man of mettle' means a warrior or an iron-master," remarked Isabel.

"It entirely depends upon how you spell the word, and that again depends upon which type of man you prefer to grasp, so it is all a matter of taste."

"How absurd you are!"

"Don't the little boys out of the Chapel Royal choir look dear?" exclaimed Lord Robert, pointing to the orchestra. "It is a sweet dress! I mean to sing in the choir of the Chapel Royal when I am grown up, because the dress is so peculiarly becoming to my style of beauty."

"It would be, I should say; and you are just the right size for it, only about six foot two."

"Exactly; scarlet is my colour. I was always bent on wearing a scarlet uniform, but I have gone through agonies of indecision as to whether I should attain that end through joining the British army or the choir of the Chapel Royal. I decided on the former, and made a mistake; and a mistake is worse than a crime, and only one degree better than a virtue."

"Then what is your reason for resigning the army in favour of the St. James's choir?" asked Isabel, opening her huge feather fan.

"Merely this, that whenever I am called upon to fight or to sing, I invariably run away; and my friends consider that what is a sign of cowardice in the one case becomes an act of public charity in the other, and that therefore the choir is my true vocation and calling."

"I should like to hear you sing."

"Pardon me, you wouldn't," replied Lord Bobby. "When I overcome my natural diffidence and give tongue, the noise is something tremendous; walls tremble, foundations shake, and roofs are carried bodily away. One day a traveller in passing through our place asked if there had been a whirlwind or an earthquake or a siege, the devastation was so appalling; but he was told that there had only been a village concert the night before, and my lordship had sung a couple of comic songs."

"It must be a terrible sound!"

"It is; that is why I so rarely do it. As Shakespeare or Milton or some other old Johnnie remarked, it is all very well to have a giant's strength, but to use it as a giant is simply beastly."

"Isn't it a brilliant scene?" said Isabel. "I love to see the stars and garters and things; don't you?"

"They are awfully jolly. Don't you think an order would suit me? Then—

With my Bath upon my shoulder and my Garter by my side,
I'd be taking some great heiress and be making her my bride.

Has your uncle got his ribbon on?"

"Of course; he always takes his Bath when he goes to grand parties," replied Isabel.

"How nice and clean of him! And that reminds me

that my mother was overhauling the school-children the other day down at our place at home, and telling them that dirt was very wrong and very unwholesome. 'But please, your ladyship,' piped up a little chap, 'it's very warm.' Wasn't that quite too nice?"

"Delicious. Oh! look at the bishops. Don't they look dear?"

"Simply sweet; just like lovely, purple, saintly footmen," agreed Bobby.

"I never saw a saintly footman."

"But I did: we had one once. He had conscientious scruples against saying 'Not at home,' and laying the wineglasses for dinner. We bore with that for a long time, because he was six foot three and very good-looking; but finally it developed into socialism, and he wanted to call the governor, Wallingford, and my mother, Augusta. Then he had to go. And mother made a rule that for the future the footmen might keep bicycles, on condition that they did not want to keep consciences as well."

"What nonsense you do talk, Bobby!"

"I know I do; it is my greatest charm. But here comes Wrexham, so I must resign my seat in his favour, as if he were a party-leader. It must be funny to be engaged, and always obliged to sit by the same person!"

Isabel gently fanned herself.

"I love variety," continued Bobby, "and I hate having to take the same woman down to dinner twice in the same season. That is one good thing in getting married; you know then that, whatever happens, there is one woman you will never have to take in to dinner again as long as you live. It is this thought alone which has inspired the majority of proposals that I have already made."

And then Bobby flew off to "fresh woods and pastures new," while Lord Wrexham sat down beside

Isabel, and began to talk to her in his gently instructive manner.

Isabel was wrong when she said that her lover had no idea that he bored her. It may be easy for a woman to throw dust in the eyes of the men who only admire her; but the men who love her see too clearly to be blinded by any paltry artifice, and frequently suffer accordingly. Lord Wrexham knew that he bored Isabel, and the knowledge well-nigh broke his heart; but he could no more help boring her than he could help breathing. He made mistakes in his dealings with her, and frequently said the wrong thing; therefore Isabel was hard upon him. Friendship may pardon our misdeeds; but it is only love that can forgive our mistakes. Nevertheless Isabel's lover succeeded in making her think that he thought she did not think him stupid—wherein he showed himself the cleverer of the two.

"Isn't the room delightfully cool?" remarked Isabel.

"It is; the system of ventilation here is admirable. I wish I could introduce it at Vernacre."

"Vernacre is perfect as it is," said Miss Carnaby graciously; "so please don't begin to improve it. I am a good Liberal; and experience has taught me that there is nothing so deteriorating in its influence as improvement, nor so retrogressive in its tendency as reform."

"You are joking," replied Lord Wrexham, kindly explaining to Isabel that she did not mean what she said; "of course it is true that a too abrupt or sudden improvement partakes more of the nature of revolution than of reform; but a slow and steady tendency in a progressive direction, is the only healthy condition for a State as for an individual."

"Nevertheless, I have noticed that reform generally

means discomfort, and that ventilation invariably means draughts."

"Proper ventilation ought not, however, to mean draughts; it should change the air imperceptibly, without causing a strong current anywhere. But you don't feel a draught here, do you, dear?" inquired his lordship anxiously, looking up at the high windows; "because, if so, I will find you another seat at once."

"Good gracious! no; how could I, on such a broiling night? I should think that even the Ministers are warm enough now."

"Are they not generally?"

"Not in their war-paint; bald heads and silk stockings are very chilly wear; it is like burning the candle at both ends."

"Or rather at neither; as candles are warm instead of cold."

"Of course; you are always right," replied Isabel, accepting the correction in the letter but not in the spirit of meekness. "This room really is a lovely sight, isn't it?" She was wondering how soon the Royalties would arrive.

"It is; its proportions are so fine that it never strikes one as large or small," agreed her lover.

"Oh! I don't mean that it is a fine sight architecturally; I mean the company looks so smart. Everybody is here—that is to say, everybody who is anybody."

"Well, not quite everybody; you are a little inaccurate, my dear. Some people are asked to the second Concert and the first Ball, instead of to the first Concert and the second Ball as we have been," explained Lord Wrexham. "I do not know how the Lord Chamberlain picks and chooses, but there is no advantage of one over the other."

"I expect they divide the people alphabetically," observed Isabel absently, looking towards the entrance at the upper end of the room.

"I expect so ; that is always a most satisfactory plan in lists of any kind. But no," he continued, looking puzzled, "that cannot be the system, because I am invited to the first Concert and my name begins with a *W*."

"But there is no reason, that I can see, why the alphabet should not begin at *W* and end at *V* for a change, instead of the old eternal *A* and *Z* system," said Isabel wickedly.

Lord Wrexham appeared more puzzled than ever. "It would be most unusual, and I do not see that any advantage would be gained thereby."

"It would be a reform, and that is always a distinct advantage, don't you know?"

Lord Wrexham's face relaxed. "Ah! now I see you are laughing at me," he said pleasantly; and after a moment's meditation, he began to laugh himself. "That was very funny, Isabel—very funny indeed! To begin the alphabet at *W* by way of a reform! Capital! capital! And, as you say, my dear, quite as sensible as many reforms that are suggested."

"Hush!" whispered Isabel; "they are coming."

And then that silence fell upon everybody which always falls just before something is going to happen—be that something the advent of a royal procession, or only the more every-day occurrence of dawn. The officers of the Household entered walking backwards, and all the company rose to their feet as the orchestra struck up the National Anthem. Finally the Royalties themselves appeared and bowed to their assembled guests, while the ladies curtsied in response, till the

room looked like a cornfield when a summer breeze goes by.

When everybody was seated, Isabel whispered to Lord Wrexham: "I do love anything in the shape of a function; it gives me a thrill all down my back. Do you ever have thrills down your back?"

Lord Wrexham considered for a moment: he never answered a question hurriedly, lest he should thereby be led into inaccuracy. "No, I cannot say that I ever do, unless I am suffering from the effects of a chill."

"Then there must be something wrong with your back, if 'God Save the Queen' does not send a thrill all down it. I would consult a spine doctor if I were you—a 'bacteriologist' I suppose one would call him."

"If you feel a sensation of that kind now, I feel sure you must be sitting in a draught; I can account for it in no other way," said Lord Wrexham, his kind face clouded over with loverlike anxiety.

"Nonsense!" replied Isabel rather sharply; "what I feel is no draught, but a deeply rooted human instinct which cries out for functions both in Church and State; and that instinct will have to be eradicated before all forms of Royalty and Ritualism can be abolished from this best of all possible worlds. It takes a strong Government to disestablish an instinct."

"I cannot quite follow you, dear; you go too quickly for a slow old coach like myself, and I am mentally out of breath with trying to keep up with you. What connection can a draught down one's back have with established methods of worship and government?"

"Never mind about following me; I am not worth the trouble. And we must not talk any more; the music is beginning."

After the music began, strange and disturbing thoughts

whirled through Isabel's mind. Whether it was because the beauty of sight and sound stimulated her emotional nature, she could not tell; but the old, aching hunger for Paul, which she had succeeded in stifling for so long, woke up and would not be put to silence. She looked at the gorgeous scene around her, and realized that the world had given her of its best; she had bartered her heart and her soul for its glory and honour, and the price had been paid her to the uttermost farthing. She had nothing to complain of on that score; and she was too clever and experienced a woman to call the triumph she had accomplished dust and ashes. It was a good enough thing in its way, only it was not Paul—and Paul, unfortunately, was the only thing that she cared for. It is absurd to call worldly success worthless, because it does not happen to be the precise thing that we personally desire; just as it would be absurd to call roast beef uneatable, when we happen to be thirsty rather than hungry. But we want what we want, and not what is suitable or convenient or wise—and nothing else in the whole world will satisfy us.

It is one of the saddest, if not one of the most comforting, things in life, that when people have caught a glimpse of the best, the second-best can never again content them. If they have once—be it only for a moment—worn the best robe and sat down to the feast, they will never more really enjoy the husks of the far country; even though the citizens of that country prepare the same with their most delicate arts, and serve them up on gold plate. Unwise men do not consider this, and fools do not understand it; so that the former find out too late that their souls must be starved to death for lack of that better thing which they once so carelessly threw away; while the latter enjoy their

husky diet in peace, unknowing that there is any better thing at all.

Isabel Carnaby belonged to the former class. She was wise enough to recognize the best when she saw it; and foolish enough, having seen it, to let it go. She might have been a happy woman, had she had more heart or less; but, now, such as she had was breaking. Suddenly the veil, which she had so carefully draped in front of her inner life, was ruthlessly torn away, and the ideal self, whom she thought she had slain, woke up in the renewed strength of a long slumber; and she knew that she loved Paul as she had loved him in the beginning and as she would love him to the end, and that no other man could ever supplant him in her love or in her life. She could have laughed aloud at the grim irony of the thing, as she realized that the brilliant scene around her, with its perfection of everything that civilization has to offer, was as nothing in her eyes in comparison with a quaint little chapel in an old-fashioned country town, where she and Paul once stood side by side and sang a hymn together.

"How these people would laugh at me," she said to herself, "if they knew that I would gladly give up all the best music of the finest orchestras in London, to hear once more 'There is a land of pure delight' sung in a Methodist chapel! But, all the same, I would."

When the concert was over and they went into the supper-room, Isabel was strangely quiet and subdued; which convinced Lord Wrexham more forcibly than ever that she had been sitting in a draught and would be ill next day.

"My dear, I wish you had a little wrap with you," he said, "to put on when you walk along the corridors and through the drawing-rooms."

"Well I haven't," replied Isabel; "I am so fond of

giving little raps to my friends that I don't keep any for myself—which perhaps is too altruistic on my part.”

When they had had supper and were leaving the Palace, Lord Robert Thistletown drew Isabel on one side. “I only just want to say good-bye to you,” he said; and she saw, to her surprise, that his usually rosy face was very white.

“Why, where ever are you going to, Bobby, that you should say good-bye instead of good-night?”

“I am starting with my regiment for India to-morrow. There is some nasty fighting out there, don't you know? and we are ordered to the front.”

“Oh, Bobby!”

“Of course it is a piece of awfully good luck for me to see active service so soon, and I should be wild with delight if it wasn't for Violet. But somehow the things you want always seem to come to you just as soon as you've left off wanting them.”

“Have you spoken to Violet?” asked Isabel.

“I did not mean to. I thought it was more honourable to leave her free till I came back, and all that sort of thing. But I went to say good-bye to her to-day, and it somehow popped out without my intending it. I am afraid I was rather a selfish brute to tell her, considering how young she is; but she looked so pretty I could not help it.” And Bobby tugged at his moustache regretfully.

“Don't regret it,” said Isabel earnestly; “men have an idiotic notion that it is the proper thing to keep a woman in ignorance of the fact that they love her, till they are ready with the marriage-settlements; it never appears to occur to them that to her the settlements are of no importance compared with the love.”

“And I'm so poor that when we get to the settlements

they'll only be strait settlements," replied Bobby, with a rueful attempt to laugh.

"Never mind that. Always remember that to a man, love-making is the prologue to marriage; but to a woman, marriage is the epilogue to making-love."

"Then good-bye," whispered Lord Bobby, squeezing her hand very tight, and manfully swallowing down a silly lump that would come in his throat; "and if I am potted by the niggers, you'll comfort my little girl, won't you, and teach her to forget?"

Isabel's eyes filled with tears. "My dear boy, I cannot teach her that, for I have not learnt it myself; it is an art never mastered by women. But I will teach her that there is really no such thing as forgetfulness just as there is really no such thing as death."

CHAPTER XIX.

Among the Wounded.

There were many who strove in the battle of life,
Who shared in the struggle and joined in the strife
And fought to their uttermost breath;
But some stood aside while the battle rolled by,
And lifted to heaven an agonized cry—
“We are wounded,” they said, “to the death!”

“WREXHAM,” said Isabel to her lover the next day, as they were sitting in the drawing-room in Prince’s Gate; “I am going to make you unhappy, but I cannot help it.”

Lord Wrexham’s face grew anxious. “I know what it is; you caught cold last night, and you fear you are going to be ill. I was afraid there was a draught all the time.”

“No, it isn’t that—it is something much worse,” replied Isabel gently; she was very patient with Wrexham now.

“Then tell me the worst at once. I cannot bear suspense where you are concerned.”

“Please don’t mind very much, dear,” said Isabel, laying her hand caressingly on his coat-sleeve; “but I cannot marry you.”

Lord Wrexham turned very white. “Cannot marry me? What ever do you mean?”

“I mean that I have been deceiving myself all along,
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and that I do not really love you, though I admire and esteem and respect you with all my heart."

"But, my dearest, I never for a moment supposed that you did love me. I used sometimes to pretend to myself that you did, because it made me so happy; but I really knew all the time that it was absurd to expect a brilliant and attractive woman like you to fall in love with such a stupid old fellow as I am. I only asked to be allowed to love you; and I ask that still."

"But it isn't fair to take the best that you have to offer, and only to give you scraps in return," cried Isabel.

"I am the best judge of that; and surely if I am content it is all right."

"But it isn't all right, Wrexham; I love some one else."

Lord Wrexham shaded his face with his hand. "Well?" was all he said, but the voice in which he said it was not his own.

Isabel's eyes were full of pity as she looked at him. "I will be candid with you at last," she said; "but please remember that it was myself I was deceiving, and not you. Even I could not sink so low as to wilfully deceive such a good man as you are."

"My dear, do not excuse yourself to me. Remember that whatever you do or leave undone I shall never blame you, nor allow any one else to do so. My queen can do no wrong."

"I was angry with Paul Seaton because I thought he had ceased to love me," continued Isabel hurriedly; "I had no right to think so, but I got the idea into my head and it would not go. And I was so wild with anger and misery, that I said hard and cruel things to him that can never be forgiven; and I drove him out of my life, and pretended that I did not mind."

"My poor, wayward, petulant child!"

"And then I persuaded myself that I did not care for the deeper things of life, but could be happy with money and rank and pleasure and such trifles as these. And people flattered me and admired me, and I thought that I was content, and that my love for Paul had been only a girlish fancy."

Lord Wrexham drew his breath hard, but he did not speak.

"But after a time I found myself growing hard and bitter, and I knew that my youth was going, and that I had nothing to show for it. And then you came by, and offered me everything that society counts worth having. I was a woman of the world, and I knew that if I became Lady Wrexham my apparent failure would be changed into a glorious success. So I accepted you."

"I see."

"Yet I was not altogether base," Isabel went on; "I love you in a restful, prosaic kind of way; and I thought that that would be enough, and that the sort of love I had given to Paul was a dream of the past which I could never dream again. But I was wrong. My love for Paul Seaton is no half-forgotten vision, but the strongest thing in me; and I cannot marry any other man."

"My darling, I quite understand," said Lord Wrexham; "it was only natural that a dull man like myself should fail to win your love. You could not help it any more than I could, so we are neither of us to blame."

Isabel shook her head. "It was not that; it had nothing to do with you. Whatever you had been, it would have made no difference. You were not Paul, and that was all that mattered to me."

"But Mr. Seaton is a clever man and a very brilliant writer," said Lord Wrexham generously, though he took care to use the prefix *Mr.*

"That has nothing to do with it either. He is clever, I admit, and kind and good; but so are scores of other men that I have known. I cannot tell you why I love him so much. I only know that to me he is the only man in the whole world, and always will be."

"My dear, I hope you will be very happy with him." And the kind voice trembled.

"Oh! no, there is no chance of that. I have offended him past all forgiveness. Please don't think I have broken off my engagement with you because I am going to marry my old lover. I shall not marry anybody, but shall count as one of society's failures; and people will pity me as they see me growing old all by myself. Yet I shall not be altogether hard and bitter, because I have tasted what love is like; and having once tasted it (even though I dashed the cup from my lips with my own hands) I can never drink of any other. But, oh! Wrexham, how can I ever forgive myself for having hurt you?" And then Isabel's torrent of words was stopped by a torrent of tears.

Lord Wrexham rose from his chair and laid his hand on her bowed head. "My dear, there must never be any question of forgiveness between you and me, for I was yours to do what you liked with. We both made a mistake—you in thinking that you could be content with me, and I in dreaming that I could make you happy. But if ever you get tired of growing old alone, remember that there are always one man's heart and hand waiting for you, if you should choose to take them."

And before Isabel could answer him he was gone.

"Always one man's heart and hand waiting for me, even when I grow old and horrid," she said to herself through her tears; "and he never even remembered that there was

Vernacre and a coronet as well. How good he is, and what a gentleman!"

During the next few weeks Isabel devoted herself to the comforting of Violet Esdaile, who accepted the consolation with the egotism of youth, never noticing that the heart of the comforter was even heavier than her own. To Violet the whole world was one huge background to Bobby Thistlethorn, and all other persons and events mere incidents therein; just as one sometimes sees prints of the Duke of Wellington with the battle of Waterloo and the Great Exhibition of '51 thrown in, as small adjuncts to the distant view, to add lustre to the central figure. We most of us have portraits of this kind hidden away somewhere in our hearts; and to a person with a sense of humour it would be interesting to note the relative importance of the figures and their surroundings. At first sight it seems funny that the University of Oxford should have been founded by King Alfred, and enriched by the art and learning of the centuries, merely to serve as a background for one particular graduate; or that London should have out-Babyloned Babylon, and become the greatest city in the world, in order to supply the near distance for the portrait of one special woman. But looked at with the seeing eye and the understanding heart these things are not really funny at all; any more than it is funny for the cluster of the Pleiades to take up apparently less space than an ordinary wedding-ring, or for the Great Nebula in Orion to seem more insignificant than the hand of a little child.

Many times a day did Isabel listen to a catalogue of Bobby's excellencies, and many times a day did she willingly say Amen to them all; for though Violet was too young to think that any man mattered except Bobby, Isabel was old enough to know that all men mattered

because of Paul. So Isabel went down to Esdaile Court with her relations: and there spent her days in talking about Bobby and her nights in dreaming about Paul.

There was one dreadful day at Esdaile when Bobby's name appeared in the list of the wounded; and a glorious one when England rang with his praises, because the news came that he had received his wounds in going back under fire—after he had himself reached a place of safety—to rescue a fallen comrade.

Then followed one of those wretched weeks when the days are punctuated by telegrams and bulletins instead of by meal-times and sun-risings; and after a time there came one of those blessed seasons, known to most of us, when those who have come back from the gates of the grave combine the pathetic sacredness of the dead with the sweet familiarity of the living, and we feel that we can never be angry with their faults nor irritated by their follies any more. Of course we can, and are, and shall be, because there is much that is human both in us and them; but at first we do not believe it possible, because there is also in both of us something that is divine.

It was in this same summer—though rather earlier than the date of Lord Robert Thistletown's going to India—that the editor of *The Hours* died; and it was generally supposed in literary circles that the brilliant young writer, Paul Seaton, would take his place. There were many who hoped for the post, as it was one which united great political influence with considerable pecuniary advantage; but there was no doubt in the minds of the initiated that Seaton was the man for the place; as, in addition to his qualifications as a man of letters, his political views were almost identical with those of Sir John Shelford, the proprietor of the paper.

Early in June Paul ran down home for a week, to

discuss with his people the change in his life and fortunes which appeared imminent; for to Paul himself—as to the rest of his profession—his selection as editor of *The Hours* seemed a foregone conclusion.

There were other reasons, besides the satisfying of his ambition, that made Paul greatly desire this appointment. As the editor of *The Pendulum* he was a poor man, but as the editor of *The Hours* he would be a rich one; and he specially wanted money just then, as things were looking dark in the Cottage at Chayford. For the last few months Joanna's health had been causing much anxiety to her parents, and Mrs. Seaton was not as strong as she had been; and it is in times of sickness and adversity that the pinch of poverty hurts most.

"Do you very much want to be the editor of *The Hours*?" asked Joanna one day.

"Yes," answered Paul; "more than I thought I should ever want anything again. Besides the pay—which it would be affectation to pretend that I am indifferent to—it is a position of such tremendous influence. The editor of *The Hours* sways more opinions than I should like to say."

"You are very fond of power, Paul," said his mother.

Paul smiled sadly. "It is all that is left to me, you see; and a man must have something to set his heart upon."

One morning, when Paul was the last to appear at the breakfast-table, Joanna greeted him with the cry: "There is a letter for you from the office of *The Hours*, and I am sure it is to say that the appointment is yours".

Paul broke the seal and found it was a communication from Sir John Shelford. It was a kind enough letter, and full of regrets; but Sir John said that he could not conscientiously give a post of such far-reaching influence as that of editor of *The Hours* to the man who

wrote *Shams and Shadows*. Paul's political views, he added, were his own; Paul's literary style and knowledge, all that could be desired; nevertheless it would not be right for the man who had more to do, perhaps, with the forming of public opinion in England than any other, to be held responsible for the unsound political teaching and the untrue philosophy of life which were found in the pages of *Shams and Shadows*. Sir John went on to speak in most flattering terms of *Some Better Thing*, and to say that such a book placed its author in the first rank of living men of letters; "but," he continued, "you are too much a man of the world to need telling that *litera scripta manet*, and that what a man has written he has written;" and he showed that, because of *Shams and Shadows*, Paul could never realize his ambition and become the editor of *The Hours*.

There was silence for a few moments after Paul had ceased reading, and Mrs. Seaton began to cry quietly behind the coffee-pot.

"Never mind, mother," he said manfully, though his face was pale and tired, "it is no good making a trouble of things. I don't deny that it is a disappointment, but I can bear it all right if only you won't let it make you unhappy."

"But it is so hard," sobbed Mrs. Seaton, "that a man should be punished for a thing of which he repented long ago."

"But the world never forgives," sighed the minister; "it is only God and our mothers that can do that."

"I think that Shelford is an old beast," cried Joanna warmly, "and I hope that the new editor, whoever he is, will ruin the paper, and cause all the Shelfords to die in the workhouse."

Paul tried to smile. "I cannot help seeing that Shel-

ford is right. The editor of *The Hours* must be above suspicion, from a literary and political point of view, or else the prestige of the paper will go down at once. Men in positions of great influence should never have anything to explain away."

"Well, it seems to me a great shame," repeated Mrs. Seaton, wiping her eyes, "that people should be punished for things after they have been sorry, and have done all in their power to undo them."

"Still it is the way of the world," replied Paul; "when a wrong has once been done there is no undoing it, but the punishment must be borne and the debt paid to the uttermost farthing."

"It is a most disgusting piece of injustice!" exclaimed Joanna.

Paul pretended to go on with his breakfast. "No, it isn't; it is perfectly just. For everything we do or leave undone we must sooner or later pay the bill, and we should take this into account before we give our orders to Fate. I am now paying the bill for the writing of *Shams and Shadows*."

"But you are sorry that the book ever was written, aren't you?" asked Joanna.

"I should rather think I am; far sorrier than any one else can ever be. Still I was a free agent, and what I did I did with my eyes open, and now that the bill has come in, I mean to pay up like a man, and not grumble. It is only a fool that builds a tower or goes to war without counting the cost."

"The cost is very heavy this time," said Mr. Seaton; "it is bad enough when a thing costs only money, but it is worse when it costs other things."

"*Shams and Shadows* has cost me a good deal more than money," said Paul.

"I know it has," replied his father; "and I hoped that the debt would have been forgiven you."

Paul smiled. "It is a vain hope now-a-days to imagine that when we go down into Egypt to buy corn, the money will be put back into our sacks' mouths. Sometimes it happens, but only to Fortune's favourites; and I have never been one of these. But if we are obliged to pay our bills, we need not talk about them, if you don't mind."

So the subject of conversation was changed; but for the rest of the day Joanna murmured to herself at intervals, when nobody was listening: "Old Shelford is a beast!"

When the minister and Joanna had gone for their usual walk, Paul sat in the dining-room with his mother and her knitting, and played with her ball of wool, just as he had done when he was a little boy.

"My dear, where is Isabel Carnaby now?" asked Mrs. Seaton suddenly.

Paul winced, but he answered quietly: "She is still in town, and is to be married to Lord Wrexham, I believe, at the end of this season".

"I was very fond of Isabel."

"I know you were, mother; so was I."

"What sort of a man is Lord Wrexham?"

"He is the best type of an English gentleman."

"Then you think he will make Isabel happy?" said Mrs. Seaton, with a sigh of relief.

"I did not say that," replied Paul, dropping the ball of wool on the floor, and diving after it.

"Do you think he will make her happy?" persisted Mrs. Seaton.

Paul was silent for a moment before he answered: "Not as happy as I could have made her".

"He won't understand her, I suppose?"

"No."

"Oh! Paul, why did you ever let her go?"

"Because I was a poor man. If her marriage with me had involved no sacrifice on her part, I would have fought to the death rather than give her up; and I would have made her marry me in spite of everything, for I know I could have made her happy. But I could not force her to accept poverty after I had seen that she hung back."

"But love matters more to a woman than anything else; and she would rather be poor with the man she loves than be rich without him."

"I don't think that you and Joanna quite understand how much wealth and rank and things of that kind matter to a woman brought up as Isabel has been," said Paul; "to you, they are outside considerations which do not enter into your inner life at all; but to her, they are the very air she breathes."

"Then, do you mean to say that she could not be happy without them?"

"No, I don't; I think, on the contrary, that it is not in the nature of such things to make Isabel happy. But she would have to resign them of her own free will. I could hardly force her to sacrifice them because I happened to think that she could be happy without them—especially as my own happiness depended upon her sacrifice."

"I see what you mean; had she chosen poverty you would have made it sweet to her, but you did not feel at liberty to force poverty upon her against her will."

"That was just it," continued Paul; "as long as I saw that my love satisfied her, I knew that I held her happiness in the hollow of my hand, and I was not

afraid of poverty for herself or for me; but when I found that she was beginning to shrink from the hard life she had chosen, I felt it was but manly to let her go."

"Do you know I was afraid at one time that you had been hard on her, my dear?"

"So I was at first—hard and bitter and proud; but when love comes on to the scene, pride has to knuckle under and hardness soon melts away. Just at first, I own, my pride held me back from her, because of some things she had said; but I soon forgave her, as I knew she was angry at the time and did not mean them; and I should have forgiven her just the same, even if she had," he added, smiling at himself.

"Do you still care for her?" asked Mrs. Seaton, knitting furiously in her excitement.

"Yes; nothing can ever alter that. Isabel will always be the one woman in the world to me."

"Then why, oh! why didn't you go and tell her so, and beg her to come back to you and let bygones be bygones?"

"I have told you—simply because she was rich and I was poor. If it had been the other way, I would have made her come back to me, and would have held her against the whole world. I could easily have put my own pride into my pocket; but her comfort was a different thing, and could not be so easily disposed of."

"But if she were rich and you were poor, you must remember also that she was a woman and you were a man, and that the first advances should have come from you. The pride of womanhood is a stronger instinct than the pride of poverty," persisted Mrs. Seaton; "and then you must not forget *Shams and Shadows*."

"I am hardly likely to do so," replied Paul rather

bitterly; "at present there seems no necessity for me to keep a book-marker in that excellent work to prevent it from slipping from my memory altogether."

"But, my dear boy, do you mean to tell me that even after *Shams and Shadows*, with its cruel satire against a woman of fashion, was published, you expected Isabel to come back to you of her own accord?"

"Yes, I did."

"Ah! Paul, you do not understand women."

"Evidently not, worse luck for me!"

Mrs. Seaton's eyes filled with tears. "I am afraid you have made a great mistake, my dear."

"I am always making them; and I find they come very expensive in the end. But I think I'll go out for a walk now; I have got such a thundering headache," said Paul, rising from his chair.

"I would, love; it will do you good."

But when he had reached the door Paul turned back, and knelt down beside Mrs. Seaton's chair and put his arms round her, as he used to do when he was a little child. "I don't know how it is," he said, "but everything I care for turns to disappointment just as it seems to be within my grasp; I was so sure of myself, and meant to be such a brilliant success, and yet I have failed all along the line. Oh! mother, comfort me."

And his mother comforted him as only his mother could.

CHAPTER XX.

Joanna.

There is many a cruel thorn,
Many a roaring lion,
Many a stone by footsteps worn,
On the road that leads to Zion.

EARLY in October Isabel came back to town, and again took up her abode at her uncle's house in Prince's Gate. Lady Farley had been naturally much disappointed at the breaking off of her niece's engagement with Lord Wrexham, but she was too just not to see that, after all, Isabel was old enough to please herself, and that a woman on the threshold of the thirties was too old to be scolded. She was perfectly conscious that, from a social point of view, Isabel was fast writing herself down a failure; and therefore, for the first time in her life, Lady Farley did not disguise from her niece her high opinion of that niece's attractions.

Like Horace Walpole, Lady Farley knew her world; and she had learned that it is when we fail, that a little flattery is beneficial to us; also, that we do not thank the friend who admires our excellencies, but for the stranger who openly exalts the strength of our weak places we reserve our undying devotion. So her ladyship was very complimentary to Isabel just then.

The first Sunday afternoon after Isabel's return,
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Edgar Ford called at the Farleys'; and, after a few customary banalities, Miss Carnaby inquired how the Seatons were getting on.

"Not at all well, I am sorry to say," replied Edgar; "Joanna is very ill, and Mrs. Seaton seems to be breaking up."

"Oh! I am so sorry; do tell me all about them," begged Isabel.

"Poor Joanna has been ailing all the summer; and now the doctors say that the only thing that could save her life would be a winter at Davos, and that she will run the greatest risk if she attempts to remain in England."

Isabel's eyes filled with tears; somehow lately all the gilt and the sunshine on things had vanished, and she kept seeing the underlying sadness of life whichever way she turned.

"Of course the Seatons are not at all well off," continued Edgar, "and a winter abroad is always a costly business for any one; but Paul, I believe, is ready to defray all Joanna's expenses, so that no burden shall fall upon his father. The difficulty, however, is that there is no one to go with her, and she is far too delicate to go alone."

"That is a serious difficulty," said Lady Farley.

"They cannot find any one who happens to be going and who would take charge of her: besides, it would be hard for the poor girl to go out, perhaps to die, with strangers; and the journey would kill Mr. or Mrs. Seaton right out, even if they could afford it."

"Couldn't her brother take her?" Lady Farley suggested.

Edgar shook his head. "He could not possibly spare the time. He is such an unselfish fellow that he would gladly go with Joanna if it could be managed, and take

every care of her ; but he could not leave London for several months without resigning his appointment as editor of *The Pendulum* ; and if he did that, he could not afford to pay even Joanna's expenses, much less his own."

Then Lady Farley—being tired of the Seatons as a subject of conversation—began to talk about other things, while Isabel dispensed the tea which had just been brought in.

"I am afraid I must be off," Edgar said at last ; "for I am going to the service at St. James's Hall to-night, and it is impossible to get a seat unless one is there half an hour before the time."

"I have never been," said Isabel ; "I should like to go and see what it is like." She felt great leanings towards anything connected with Methodism just then ; not from any special sympathy with the teachings of John Wesley, but simply because Methodism—like yellow roses—reminded her of Paul.

"Then come with me now ! I will take great care of her, Lady Farley, and bring her back safe and sound."

"Yes ; go, my dear," said her ladyship kindly, "if you think it will interest you." Lady Farley regarded religious services as she regarded love affairs, namely, as seemly diversions *pour passer le temps*.

So Isabel ran upstairs to put on what women call "her things," and then she and Edgar repaired to St. James's Hall.

When they arrived there the hall was practically full, though it was a good half-hour before the beginning of the service ; but the congregation kept streaming in, and by seven o'clock every corner was densely packed, and people were standing in the doorways and the passages.

"This crowded audience looks more like a political meeting than a religious service," whispered Isabel to Edgar, with that surprise which we all feel when God, for the time being, occupies public attention to the exclusion of Man, and heaven instead of earth becomes the topic of the hour.

"It is a wonderful sight!" Edgar whispered back; "there is nothing like it in London."

The whole scene stirred Isabel strangely. Not only was the crowd very large, but it consisted chiefly of men; a great number of them were soldiers in their scarlet uniforms, and almost all of them were counted among those poor to whom it has been promised that the Gospel shall be preached. These were none of the well-to-do people who go to church or to chapel, as they go to court, because it is the correct thing to pay homage to the heavenly as to the earthly Sovereign; but working men, whose hearts as well as whose hands had been scarred and hardened by the ceaseless grind of poverty and toil. On the platform behind the minister's desk sat a row of sweet-faced Sisters of the Poor, in their plain black gowns and long grey veils; while again behind them came the band, and a crowd of "workers," filling the enormous platform of St. James's Hall up to the roof.

A less emotional woman than Isabel Carnaby would have been thrilled at the sound of a hymn sung by so vast a concourse of people, and at the sight of so large a number gathered together with one accord in one place; and when the time for the sermon came, and the preacher showed forth some of the sorrows of the world, and echoed its great cry for help, she felt that there was no resisting that appeal. Until now she had been one of the careless daughters—one of the women that are at ease; and she had been deaf to the weeping and the wail-

ing inside the prison walls of poverty. But at last her ears had been opened, and she had heard the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners appointed to die; and she felt she must be up and doing, and must take her part in stemming the torrent of the world's great flood of tears.

She and Edgar said little on their way home; and each understood that the heart of the other was too full for speech.

The next day Isabel wrote the following letter:—

“MY DEAR MRS. SEATON,

“I am so dreadfully sorry to hear from Mr. Ford that Joanna is ill; I cannot tell you how unhappy it has made me, but I think you will understand without being told.

“I am full of hope that a winter at Davos will set her right again, as I have known it work such wonderful cures. But I hear your difficulty is that she can find nobody to accompany her; and therefore I am writing to ask if I may offer my services. I would promise to take every care of her; and my maid—who is an experienced nurse as well as a most faithful old servant—would look after us both.

“I could be ready to start in a fortnight from now; and could arrange to stay as far into the spring as the doctors thought desirable on Joanna's account.

“Yours lovingly,

“ISABEL CARNABY.”

This letter brought great joy to the little home at Chayford. Mrs. Seaton's first impulse was to close with Isabel's offer at once, and so ensure a chance of recovery for Joanna; but she felt that anything connected with Isabel was Paul's business, and that therefore she could settle nothing without first consulting him. So she wrote a loving letter to Isabel, telling the latter how grateful both Joanna and her parents were for this great kindness, but that Paul was undertaking the entire management of his sister's journey, so the final arrangements must rest with him.

Then Mrs. Seaton forwarded Isabel's letter to Paul, bidding him deal with it as he thought best. "I am not doing this in order to bring Paul and Isabel together again," she said to herself, "but entirely on Joanna's account; I should have done just the same had Miss Dallicot made the offer instead of Isabel, for it is clearly Paul's duty to make all the arrangements he can for his sister's comfort. It is purely a matter of business." Then a smile stole round the corners of her mouth as she added: "It will all come right again as soon as they see each other, and my boy will be as happy as he deserves to be".

For Paul's mother had heard of the breaking off of the Wrexham engagement, and had drawn her own conclusions.

A day or two after this, Isabel received a letter from Paul:—

"MY DEAR MISS CARNABY,

"My mother has forwarded to me your most kind and generous offer of help to us in our present difficulty, as it is I who am taking all the responsibility of Joanna's illness. I feel that we cannot refuse the offer without due consideration, because the plan that you propose would prove such an inestimable benefit to my sister; nor can we, on the other hand, accept it without due consideration, because it would be a most serious undertaking for you. Therefore, if you will allow me, I will call upon you to-morrow afternoon to discuss the matter more fully than we can do by letter.

"Yours gratefully,

"PAUL SEATON."

As Paul wrote the above, he laughed at his own folly. "What a fool I am!" he said to himself; "of course I could manage it perfectly by writing, if I wanted to do so; but I am as excited as a boy of twenty at the mere idea of seeing her face and hearing her voice again. I

wonder if Lord Wrexham minded being thrown over by her as much as I did ; if so, I pity him with all my heart."

So Paul Seaton and Isabel Carnaby saw each other face to face once more. Because they were well-bred people—and, moreover, a man and woman of the world—they met apparently with perfect ease and without any disquieting emotion ; although Paul's heart beat like a regimental drum all the time, and Isabel felt as if a little bird were fluttering in the middle of her throat. A casual observer would have thought that they were ordinary acquaintances, who had seen each other the day before ; and the only difference that the most experienced eye could have detected was that they were neither quite as clever as usual. They did not seem to look at one another with any special attention ; and yet in the first ten seconds that they were together, Paul knew that Isabel was thinner than of old, and that there had come a tired look into the blue eyes ; and Isabel perceived that there were many grey hairs round Paul's temples, and that she and Time together had managed to plough some deep furrows across his forehead.

"How do you do?" began Isabel, talking a shade faster than her wont ; "it is very good of such a busy man to spare the time to come and see me."

"It is very good of you to let me come," replied Paul ; "but it is so much easier to talk over plans than to write about them."

"Then let us get to business at once," suggested Isabel hurriedly ; "as I daresay you have not much time to spare."

She really meant that she had not much courage to spare ; but we so rarely say what we actually mean. And why should we ? The understanding people know

without our saying, and it doesn't matter whether the stupid ones know or not.

"Certainly," agreed Paul, who happened to be one of the understanding people; "I know it is very bad manners to be in a hurry, but unfortunately I nearly always am. I believe my health will be permanently impaired by the scalding state in which I always have to swallow cups of tea during afternoon calls. Long and bitter experience has taught me that unless you can fly before you hear the distant rattle of the tea-cups, you are lost; if once tea is within ear-shot, escape becomes impossible till the cup is drained to the dregs. If you leave in the interval between the sound of tea and its outpouring, you somehow cast a slur upon the quickness of your hostess's servant."

Paul knew perfectly well about that little bird fluttering in Isabel's throat, and he talked on at random in order to give her time to recover herself.

She laughed. "Well, I am glad that the tea is here now, so that you can have a cup at once and drink it at your leisure."

"Thank you. And now, about Joanna. I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for your most kind suggestion; but before we go into that, I want you to consider what it will mean to you. At present I think you have no idea of the sacrifice which it will involve on your part."

"I don't mind that; the greater the sacrifice the better it will be for me. You see, I have done nothing but help myself for thirty years, and now I think it is time I began to help other people."

"But this is such a big beginning," persisted Paul; "it means shutting yourself up for six months in an atmosphere of sickness, and possibly of death; and this

is a tremendous undertaking for any woman, especially for one who has hitherto had all the wheels of life oiled for her."

"But think of Joanna."

"I am trying not to think of her, till I have done thinking of you. Of course my first impulse was to thank you on my knees for thus coming to our help; but you must be considered as well as Joanna; and I am not sure that I should be justified in letting you make so great a sacrifice for any one who has after all no claim upon you." And Paul got up from his seat and looked out of the window, so that Isabel might not see his face.

Isabel's eyes grew wistful. "Please don't stop me now that at last I am trying to be good."

"Heaven forbid! But the path of duty is not easy walking, and I would carry you over the rough places if I could; for the way is thorny and your feet are very tender," replied Paul gently.

"Nevertheless I am going."

"And I cannot help you, much as I should wish it. If Joanna became much worse I should come out to her once; but I could not afford the time to stay with her long, as the unavoidable expenses of her illness will make me specially busy all this winter."

"Nevertheless I am going," repeated Isabel.

"You have definitely made up your mind?"

"Yes."

"What does Lady Farley say about it?" asked Paul.

"She says I am old enough and wise enough to please myself, and to know my own business best."

"Then, if your decision is now made and my words are powerless to affect you one way or another, I may tell you what this act of yours means to me and to my

people. It will probably be the saving of Joanna's life—at any rate it is giving her the one chance she has of recovery; and without you this one chance would have been denied her. After I have told you this, all expressions of gratitude would be superfluous, I think."

"Yes; please don't thank me; I don't want to be thanked," said Isabel breathlessly; "let us make all the necessary arrangements; for Joanna and I ought to be starting soon, if this foggy weather continues."

So Paul and Isabel set to work to plan poor Joanna's exodus out of England before the winter actually set in; and three weeks after this interview Isabel and Joanna went out to Davos Platz together, with the former's faithful old nurse to take care of and look after them.

The new life was very interesting to Isabel. She had hitherto lived in a world where sickness and death were put out of sight and forgotten as far as possible; but now she was suddenly plunged into the midst of a society of people who were all either ill or anxious. But these bore it bravely, and put on a cheerful courage; and if she had not known that all was not well with them, she would have found them pretty much the same as happier folks.

Joanna specially interested Isabel, and the two women were drawn very close together. Neither had ever had a sister; and a woman who has never had a sister has missed something which can never be made up to her in this world. Women who have no sisters share their confidences with their friends or their sisters-in-law, just as men who have no legs walk about on cork or wooden ones; but perfect satisfaction is not found in makeshifts. However anything is better than nothing; so Isabel and Joanna found much pleasure in each other's society. ♦

Joanna did not talk much about herself; but when

she did, it was with perfect ease and cheerfulness. She had been brought up in a circle where the things which are seen and temporal are not more familiar or real than the things which are unseen and eternal; and this familiarity and sense of nearness is of good comfort to such souls as feel forebodings of the chill and the darkness of the great Shadow.

"I minded dreadfully being ill at first," she said one day to Isabel, after they had been some weeks together, and their friendship was established; "I had meant to do so much work for God—in my own little world I really was doing it—and it seemed rather hard to be suddenly put by on the shelf as of no further use. I was actually getting so conceited that I thought none of the classes or meetings in Chayford would get on properly without me; and yet mother says in her last letter that my Bible-class has increased in numbers since Miss Dallicot became the leader in my place, while the Dorcas-meeting is doing more work than ever. As for my district, Alice Martin took it; and the people simply adore her, she is so sweet and pretty and can speak to them so beautifully. So the Lord can carry on His work without my help, though at one time I doubted it." And Joanna laughed.

"I did not know that Alice was good at work of that kind."

"She is; she is simply splendid. In the first place she is very pretty, and that has a tremendous influence. It would take me twenty visits to the poor to win as much love as she gains in one."

"But I did not know she was so religious."

"She was always good and amiable," replied Joanna, "even when she was quite a child. But lately she has been a great deal under Edgar Ford's influence, and has

learnt from him the importance of our responsibility to the poor. She will do more good in my district than I have ever done."

"I suppose the world could do without any of us," said Isabel sadly, "none of us are indispensable to anything or anybody."

Joanna shook her head. "The world might, but God couldn't."

"But you said that He could."

"Oh! no, I didn't. I said that He could carry on His work without us, which is quite a different thing."

Isabel looked puzzled. "What is the difference?"

"Don't you see? it is like this. When I was a little girl, father always allowed me to open all his letters with a small paper-knife. I used to love doing it, I felt so important, and I imagined that if it hadn't been for me, father's letters would have permanently remained unopened. I used to say nearly every day, 'You couldn't do without me, could you, father?' and he always answered, 'No'. Of course father could have opened all his letters well enough without my help, but he couldn't have done without me all the same."

"How good you are, dear Joanna!"

"Indeed I am not—I only wish I were; but I am ill, and when one is ill one has plenty of time to think. And I have come to the conclusion that God knows His own business best, and that He must often smile at us tenderly when He sees us so ready to help Him with our advice. He knows everything, and He says that a certain thing will be best for us; we know next to nothing, and yet, like Beatrice, we are 'at Him upon our knees every morning and evening,' to prove to Him that He is mistaken and that we know better. It really is rather humorous."

"Then you have learnt to leave everything to Him, and not to worry?"

"I hope I have," replied Joanna. "I don't deny that it has been a difficult lesson. At one time, like everybody else, I thought that I knew better than God, and I tried my utmost to teach Him what was the right thing for me and for Methodism and for Christianity at large; and I confess that I was grieved, not to say reproachful, when He did not follow my advice. But now I just sit still, and let Him take all the responsibility."

"It must be very restful," sighed Isabel.

"It is. If you went on a long voyage, it would be very tiring to spend all your time in trying to steer the ship by beating against the bulwarks with your hands, and very ineffectual and foolish. Then why behave thus absurdly on the voyage of life? For our Pilot never makes mistakes."

It was not till the two friends became very intimate that they began to talk about Paul, though they both spent much time in thinking about him. But at last even that barrier of reserve gave way, as most barriers do, if only a *tête-à-tête* be long enough, and Paul's sister soon discovered that Isabel still loved Paul.

"My dear, why don't you ask him to come back to you?" asked Joanna abruptly.

"Oh! I couldn't—I should be ashamed, after the way I have treated him."

"Then do you mean to let your pride spoil both your life and his?"

Isabel did not answer, and Joanna continued: "When people come to where I am now, they look at life so differently from how they used to look when the end of the road was not in sight; and they see that the things which once seemed important are trivial, and the things

which once seemed trivial are the only things that matter. When you stand where I am standing, you won't care a scrap whether your pride and your self-respect received their due; but you will care infinitely whether you and Paul are together, or whether you will have to go down into the dark valley all alone."

Isabel began to cry quietly.

"Don't cry, Isabel; I am so sorry that I have upset you, and I hate to talk in this horrid, depressing way. But I felt I must tell you just once that, when the end comes, you will find that nothing really matters except the love of God and our love for each other; and I want you to realize this before it is too late."

Isabel came and knelt down by Joanna's sofa. "Do you think that Paul could forgive me?" she asked.

"I should think so; there is nothing that real love cannot forgive, and I am sure that Paul really loved you."

"How do you know so much about love, Joanna?"

"I can't tell; I suppose every woman knows all about it, whether she has tasted it or not. That is one of the things that I used to think I could teach the Lord; I imagined that it was best for me—and for every other woman—to live the ordinary woman's happy life. But God knew better, and so love passed me by."

"Poor Joanna!"

Joanna rested her cheek against Isabel's. "You need not pity me now, dear; I have long ceased to mind, though I did dreadfully at one time. But when God withholds a thing from us, He always gives us something better in its place. It is hard, I admit, to stand alone on Pisgah, and to see the others going on without us into the Promised Land; but Pisgah and its disappointment are forgotten, after we have stood for a moment upon

the Mount of Transfiguration, and have caught glimpses of the glory which shall be revealed."

After a moment's silence Isabel said softly: "I don't believe there ever was anybody so good as you and Paul".

"Paul is a good man; no one but father and mother and I quite knows how good, I think."

"I do," whispered Isabel.

"Of course he gets angry sometimes," continued Joanna, "and is stern and self-willed and masterful; but he is very gentle and tender underneath, and very unselfish. There is only one thing he has ever done which has really grieved me, and which seemed to me to be inconsistent with the rest of his character; but I suppose when men are very unhappy and bitter they do things for which they are hardly accountable. Still I wish Paul had not written *Shams and Shadows*."

"He never did write it," cried Isabel, looking up through her tears; "he was far too good and true and noble to write such a nasty, sneering book as that. He could not have done it if he had tried!"

"Then if Paul didn't write it, who did?"

"I did," replied Isabel with a sob; "I was angry with myself and therefore with everything else, and I wrote that horrid book in a fit of temper. And when I saw how people hated it, I was ashamed, and felt I could not bear the disgrace of being known as its author. And then Paul saved me from the consequences of my own folly, and bore the punishment instead of me."

CHAPTER XXI.

As it was in the Beginning.

Sometimes mortals find the portals
Of the fairy-land;
And they straightway through the gateway
Enter, hand in hand.

THERE was a long silence; then Joanna said gently, "And you doubted if he loved you after this?"

Isabel only sobbed.

"My dear, I am very glad you have told me," Joanna continued, as she softly stroked Isabel's hair; "it is an unspeakable joy to me to find that Paul never really fell below himself after all. But you mustn't tell any one else; it is now Paul's secret and not yours."

"Oh! I must; I must tell the whole world how good Paul has been, and how vilely and cruelly it has misjudged him."

"You must do nothing of the kind. If Paul has jeopardized his literary reputation to keep a secret, no one has a right to tell that secret without his permission. Don't you see how it is? He has thought nothing in the whole world of so much importance as the screening of you; therefore it would be cruel indeed of you to undo his life-work in a fit of hysterical conscientiousness."

"But it would serve me right for people to know how

horrid and selfish and cowardly I have been," cried Isabel.

"Probably it would; but now I am considering what is due to Paul, and not what is due to you, my dear."

"Oh, Joanna, can you ever forgive me?"

"I am afraid I couldn't have done so when I was strong and well; but, as I told you, things are different with me now. Yes, I forgive you, Isabel; though I confess it isn't in me to forgive as Paul forgives, nor to love as Paul loves; but I cannot in the least understand how either of you did what you have done—you are both incomprehensible to me. Tell me how it happened."

"After I had quarrelled with Paul, I was in an awfully bitter mood, because I thought he was hard and cold and did not love me as I loved him. I was ashamed of caring for a man more than he cared for me, don't you see?"

"I am afraid I don't see, but never mind."

"Don't you see that if a man gives his love unrequited, he establishes at once a claim upon one woman's gratitude and all women's sympathy; while if a woman does the same thing, she is despised by one man and derided by the rest?"

"It wouldn't strike me in that light, but go on."

"Then it occurred to me that I would write a book which should convince Paul that I was a shallow, heartless woman of the world, and that I was incapable of really loving him or any other man. It was agony to my pride to feel that perhaps Paul had only cared for me because I was considered a good match; and I meant to turn the tables on him, and wound his pride, by making him believe that I had only been playing with him all the time just to amuse myself."

"A severe punishment on Paul for the freaks of your own imagination, my child!"

"All the time I was writing the book, I thought only of him and of how I could manage to hurt him. I did not care a straw whether the novel were a success or not, or whether anybody read it except Paul. But when it came out it made a hit, as you know, and everybody was talking about it."

"Yes; I remember."

"Though people thought it clever they did not really like it, and they said nasty things about the author."

Joanna nodded. Nobody knew better than she did the nasty things that had been said; yet she did not remove her caressing hand from the bent head.

"And then," continued Isabel, "I was in a perfect frenzy of fear lest they should find out that I had written it, and should begin to look shy at me. I cared so much for approval and admiration, that I thought it would kill me to be disapproved of as society disapproved of the author of *Shams and Shadows*. I used to lie awake at night wondering whatever I could do to put people off the scent."

"Well, and what happened then?"

"One day, when my terror was at its height, I heard that Paul had told Lord Robert Thistlethorn that he had taken the name of Angus Grey. I saw in a flash what that meant; it meant that the man, whom I had wounded and insulted, understood better even than I did what a disadvantage the authorship of *Shams and Shadows* would be to me; and had therefore shielded me at the expense of his own literary reputation, and had taken my punishment upon himself."

Joanna's eyes were shining. "It was a fine thing to do; for Paul's literary reputation was no light matter to him."

"I know it wasn't ; it was the best thing he had, and he gave it up to save me."

That night Joanna lay awake, thinking over the strange story she had heard. "It must be wonderful to be loved like that!" she said to herself. And because nothing this side heaven can quite stifle the cry of the human heart for human love (if the human heart happen to be a woman's) there were tears on Joanna's lashes when at last she fell asleep.

Isabel also lay awake that night, torn by the conflicting emotions of love and pride. And because, when these two come into conflict, the result is a foregone conclusion, she wrote the next day to Paul :—

"MY DEAR PAUL,

"Will you forgive me? Not because I deserve it, but because I love you.

"Yours as you would,

"ISABEL CARNABY."

Then followed a season of great anguish of mind on Isabel's part. She now felt absolutely certain that Paul no longer loved her, and would therefore humiliate her by refusing his forgiveness ; and she decided that she should at once hide herself from the world in a sisterhood, and spend the remainder of her disappointed days in conventual seclusion. She even went so far as to decide that she should call herself "Sister Marah," because life had proved so bitter to her. Isabel was nothing if not dramatic.

The answer to her letter came by telegraph :—

"Expect me Thursday.—PAUL."

Isabel was alone when this telegram was brought to her, and as she read it she flushed with joy.

"He hasn't wasted a minute," she said to herself.

"He must have started as soon as he had my letter, and be travelling night and day without stopping."

Then she looked at her reflection in a mirror and laughed softly, because she was still young and a man loved her. She was very human, even at her best.

But when Thursday came she was dreadfully frightened. It was one thing to feel conscious of her power over Paul while half a continent divided them, and quite another to feel conscious of his power over her when she was expecting to see him face to face every minute.

When at last he did arrive, Joanna went into the hall to meet him; but Isabel was stricken with that paralyzing form of shyness which so often seizes us when our heart's desire is within our grasp, and makes us wish, for one mad moment, to throw it away because we have longed for it so passionately. So she remained alone in the *salon* and looked out of the window, and her knees felt as if they were made of muslin, like the knees of dolls. Then some one opened the door and shut it behind him; and at that her heart beat so violently that the very snow-clad mountains outside began to tremble and shake as she looked at them. With a supreme effort she turned round, and tried to repeat the appeal for forgiveness which she had prepared; but she could not utter a word, because Paul's arms were holding her fast; and there was no need to utter a word, because she had seen Paul's face.

Life's attar-of-roses is as rare as it is precious, and it takes the sunshine of many summers and the braving of many thorns to produce a single drop. But that drop, when produced, is worth all that it cost, and the perfume of it will last for ever. So Paul and Isabel thought during the next half-hour.

After the lovers had returned to earth, Isabel said:
"I shall now tell the whole world that I wrote that

horrid book, and that it has misjudged you all along ; and then every one will know how splendidly you have behaved."

"You shall do nothing of the kind, sweetheart."
And Paul kissed her again.

"But I must. I could not bear for you to bear the blame any longer."

"Still, you will have to bear it, my darling. I could not bear any one to have it in his power to blame you, and I must have my own way this time."

"But it isn't fair."

"I can't help that. I can stand it very well when people say things against me, but I could not stand it at all if people said things against you ; so I am acting from purely selfish motives when I say that the secret must always be kept for my sake."

"But, Paul, how can I show my gratitude to you, and my penitence ?"

"Simply by doing what I ask, and by giving no one any excuse for finding fault with my wife."

"It was a horrid book," said Isabel sadly.

"I know it was, dear heart, but you did not mean a word of it, you know."

"I wrote it in a temper—a vile, hateful, disgusting temper."

"I know you did ; but the world might not understand this as well as I do, and therefore might misjudge you ; and the world shall not have the chance."

"I really was frightfully angry with you," said Isabel, now revelling in the contemplation of dangers past ; "I used to rack my brains for things that I could write to vex you."

"When did you begin to love me again ?" queried Paul.

Isabel pondered for a moment. "I think I really must have loved you all the time, or else I could not have hated you so."

Paul laughed. Life had been so serious to him of late that it was delightful to hear a woman talk nonsense again.

"And will you go on loving me always?" he asked.

"I shan't be able to help it; when I once care for any one I am like a five-pound note on Sundays—there is no possibility of changing me."

"My dear one, how sweet you are!"

"How did you find out that I was the author?" asked Isabel, trying to tie a knot in Paul's watch-chain.

"I knew it at once; I also knew that you had written it to hurt me; and, what is more, that you had succeeded beyond your wildest expectations."

"Poor old Paul! Did it make you very angry?"

"Not angry; but I confess it hurt me more than I had believed I was capable of being hurt. But I soon forgot this in my fear of the secret's coming out as to who was the author, and my knowledge of how much the disclosure of this secret would hurt you."

"And then you decided to pretend that you had written it?"

"It seemed to me the only thing to do to ensure your permanent safety; as, when people once know a thing, they naturally cease to speculate about it; and they had already come to the conclusion that the book must have been written by some one in your set. Of course I knew that your publishers any day might show up my false pretences and disgrace me in the eyes of the world, which would never believe in the purity of my motives, but would condemn me as an arrant impostor to the end of the chapter. But I also knew that your publishers

would not do this without permission from you ; and, angry as you were with me, I did not think you would deal me this final and irrevocable blow, because I felt sure you would understand my reasons, and would know that I had done this somewhat doubtful action solely out of consideration for you."

"I understood this at once."

"I knew you would," Paul continued ; "but, you see, dear, other people might not have done so ; and they might have fancied I was no better than a literary thief, trading upon a reputation which really was not mine."

Isabel was silent for a moment ; then she said : "I told Joanna ; I could not help it".

Paul's face fell ; he could not bear to feel that even his sister should have the right to sit in judgment upon Isabel.

"And you must also tell your father and mother," persisted Isabel ; "I could not be happy if I felt that they still misunderstood you."

"I don't know about that."

"But I do. If you will give way to me just in this, I will do what you want about everything else ; and no one but your own people shall ever know that I wrote *Shams and Shadows*."

And Paul reluctantly consented.

"*Shams and Shadows* made a lot of money," said Isabel, "but I could not touch a penny of it. I hated it so much that I gave it all to charity."

Paul could not help laughing. "A somewhat strange reason, dear heart, but by no means an uncommon one," he said.

Then followed a very happy week. Paul and Isabel were naturally in a state of bliss ; and Joanna rejoiced too—and on her own account—for the doctors told her

that the air of Davos had done for her all that they had hoped and far more than they had expected ; and assured her that she would get quite strong and well again. And this fact doubled the happiness of the other two : for Paul loved his sister very dearly ; and Isabel's heart was filled with thanksgiving to feel that she had been allowed to be, in a measure, the means of Joanna's recovery, and so had done something for Paul in return for all that he had done for her.

But Paul could not stay with them for more than a week, so he went back to his work, promising to return for Joanna and Isabel when spring returned to England.

When he had been back in London for about three weeks his father wrote to tell him that Miss Dallicot was very ill, and had expressed a great wish to see the minister's son once more. So Paul ran down home for a day or two.

Things were brighter at the Cottage than they had been for some time, for Mrs. Seaton began to gain strength as soon as she heard that all was well with her children, and that health had returned to Joanna and happiness to Paul ; and her husband felt better and younger because she did.

Paul had written to tell his mother that all was right again between himself and Isabel. He gave no explanations, nor did Mrs. Seaton require any : for she was wise enough to know that if people love each other, explanations are never needed ; and if they don't love each other, no explanations will mend matters.

When Paul went to see Miss Dallicot he found her extremely weak, and shrivelled up into a little raisin of a woman. But her diction was as choice as ever.

" It is unspeakably gratifying to me to see your countenance once again, my dear young friend," she began, " and

excessively kind of you to snatch a brief moment from the busy round of your incessant and onerous duties, to give such pleasure to an infirm and aged woman, who perhaps overstepped the rights of friendship in putting you to such trouble."

"Not at all, Miss Drusilla. I am awfully glad to see you again, and I only wish that I could see you looking better."

"That, my dear Paul, is a wish which can never be fulfilled in this world. But the young should not be made gloomy by the contemplation of sombre and serious subjects; therefore let us divert our thoughts into a more invigorating and cheering channel."

So Paul told the old lady about Isabel and Joanna and their life at Davos, and about his work in London, and his hope that he and Isabel would be married some time during the year then beginning; while Miss Drusilla listened with the greatest interest, and made her usual long-winded comments.

At last she said: "I feel that I owe it to you, my dear young friend, to offer some explanation of the fact of my so specially desiring to see your face once more, and of my venturing to put you to the trouble and fatigue of a journey from London, by the oracular expression of this desire on my part".

"It is a pleasure rather than a trouble," said Paul kindly; "it was very good of you to want to see me and I was very pleased to come." But all the same he really was surprised, as naturally Miss Dallicot had never been a special friend of his.

"The fact of the matter is," continued the little spinster, "you bear a strong facial resemblance to some one for whom I entertained a warm regard a considerable number of years ago. I daresay to your sound and

vigorous judgment an accidental physical likeness appears a somewhat unsound basis for interest or attachment; but the fact remains that it does form such a basis in my case, though I should agree with you that from an intellectual standpoint the position is untenable."

"Oh! I can understand as much as that; for actually I once held a poor woman's baby for her while she scrambled up to the top of a London omnibus—and an extremely unattractive and unfanciable little brat it was—simply because the woman looked tired, and her eyes reminded me of Isabel's."

"Dear me, how very interesting! I trust that you informed Miss Carnaby of this somewhat romantic incident, as it would surely have proved most gratifying to her."

"Oh! no, it wouldn't; she would have been dreadfully hurt at being considered to resemble the middle-aged wife of an impecunious artisan. Women are never pleased at being thought like anybody who isn't well dressed, I have discovered. I remember Isabel was quite angry once when I showed her a peasant girl by Greuze, and said it reminded me of her; and she told me that if I'd said she was like a fashion-plate she should have been far better pleased—and she really would," added Paul, laughing at the remembrance.

"The feminine mind has certainly some strange inconsistencies," murmured Miss Drusilla, unconsciously straightening her cap.

"Of course it has; that is why it is so fascinating. I would not give a fig for a woman who had no bewitching little vanities. And the funny thing is that they are not vain of the things which really are a credit to them, but of the things which are a credit to their dressmakers. Now, take Isabel; she is awfully pleased with herself when she has got a new frock on, but she never knows

that it is her figure which makes the frock look so well ; and she thinks far more about the colour of her gowns than about the colour of her eyes."

(But here Paul was mistaken.)

"I should have imagined that men, with their robuster minds and sounder common sense, would have despised such small vanities as these," remarked Miss Dallicot.

"Not we ; we like them."

"I always used to think that a profound and scholarly mind would not find happiness apart from profound and scholarly companionship, and would experience an extreme distaste for what I might call foolish and frivolous society. But I learnt afterwards that these views of mine were incorrect."

"I am afraid they were."

A far-away look came into Miss Drusilla's faded eyes ; her thoughts had gone back to the long-ago.

"When I was comparatively young," she said dreamily, "I was honoured by the friendship of a most cultured and accomplished man. He was a great scholar ; and under his tuition I made myself proficient in both Greek and Latin. It is true that I loved learning for its own sake, but I loved it still better for his ; and I worked long and late in order to render myself more fit for his companionship and more congenial to his taste. As you will perceive, I felt it only natural that so profound a mind should shrink from the society of the flippant and the unlearned."

"I see," said Paul, and his voice was very tender.

"My friend's profession was tutorial," continued Miss Dallicot, "and in later life he became the headmaster of one of our great public schools. He and I were so intimately acquainted that I speculated much as to his future ; and I felt sure that—if he ever did enter the holy estate of matrimony—he would naturally require a helpmeet

who could assist him in the fulfilment of his scholastic duties, and accompany him in his ceaseless pursuit after knowledge."

Paul felt very pitiful; the world is so full of sad little mistakes like this, which are too pathetic to be comedies and too commonplace to be tragedies.

"Did you study very hard?" he asked.

"Indeed I did. I overcame the difficulties of the Greek and Latin tongues with amazing rapidity—at least so my dear master said; and he counted me his most successful pupil."

"And then?" said Paul.

"Then it happened that a young lady came to pay a lengthy visit to friends in our neighbourhood. She was well born, and possessed considerable personal charm; but her ignorance was something appalling. I recall that she once asked, before a room full of people, whether Homer wrote Greek or Latin, and if Cæsar were a poet." And Miss Dallicot fairly shuddered.

Paul could not forbear smiling, Miss Drusilla was so intensely shocked at the mere memory of these atrocities.

"Yet in spite of all this," continued Miss Dallicot, "my friend married her. Why he did so was always incomprehensible to me, as they two could not have had a single idea or interest in common. Yet he did it. I shall never forget a visit I once paid to them not long after their marriage. She endeavoured to make use of a Latin quotation, and actually—yes, actually, my dear Paul—she made a false quantity; and she the wife of a head-master!"

"Good gracious!" said Paul; "what ever did the bridegroom do?"

"It was then that he showed the marvellous nobility and patience which always struck me so much in my

contemplation of his character. I realized what he must have suffered, as a false quantity was always torture to his cultivated and sensitive ear; if one of his boys were guilty of such a thing, he straightway chastised the offender; when I made a false quantity, he blamed me severely, and said that his nerves could not stand it."

"Then what did he do to his bride?"

"My dear, his amiability was something marvellous. I was so grieved for him—so ashamed—that I could scarcely look up; but he rose to the occasion. He said not one single word of reproof—though I knew that many were burning upon his tongue—but he just laughed, and went up to his wife and kissed her. Did you ever hear of an instance of more heroic self-restraint?"

Paul thought that he had, but he did not say so. He sympathized with Miss Drusilla; but he also sympathized with the headmaster.

"Did she seem very much ashamed?" he asked.

"Not at all. That was the most painful part of that most painful scene. The careless young thing was as callous as she was illiterate. She merely laughed, as if it were nothing more than a joke, and called my dear friend 'a silly boy'. It struck me, and it strikes me still, as a most unseemly epithet for any right-minded woman to apply to her husband, especially when he was a man of between thirty and forty years of age, and one of the greatest Greek scholars of his day."

"Where is your friend now?"

Miss Dallicot sighed. "I grieve to say that his earthly career was closed some years ago. His wife was taken first, and he survived her only for the space of a few months. Some persons, not intimately acquainted with the parties concerned, said that his death was due to sorrow for hers; but I think this statement must have

been incorrect, as so uneducated and frivolous a woman could never have been a thoroughly congenial companion to so erudite and wise a man. Therefore I conjecture that the approximation in the respective dates of his and her demise was merely a coincidence."

Paul did not feel so sure of this; he could imagine that a world depopulated of Isabel would be quite too desolate for human habitation. But all he said was: "It is an interesting little story".

So it was; but the interesting part of it was the part that poor little Miss Dallicot was incapable of seeing. People who tell us a story often tell far more than they intend, and, in fact, far more than they themselves know. They open the door that we may have a peep into their back-garden, and they have no idea that to us that peep includes a distant and extensive view, which their short-sighted eyes have never beheld.

"My friend was a most fascinating individual," continued Miss Drusilla dreamily, "endowed with unusual natural gifts, which were perfected by most assiduous study. He was withal the most modest man I have ever met. In person, my dear Paul, you strongly resemble him; it seems, perchance, strange for so trifling a detail to remain in one's mind for a period of over forty years, yet I can still vividly recall the colour of his hair, which was precisely of the same shade as yours."

Then Paul said good-bye to the little spinster, as she was growing too tired to talk any more. And he never saw her again.

A fortnight after his visit to Chayford Miss Drusilla died, and when her will came to be read it was found that she had left her entire fortune—amounting to some thirty thousand pounds—to Paul Seaton.

CHAPTER XXII.

For Conscience' Sake.

I hear a call through the silver night
And across the golden day,
"Go forth and work, for the fields are white!"
And I dare not disobey.

IT was during the winter which Joanna spent at Davos, that Edgar Ford screwed his courage to the sticking point sufficiently to ask Alice Martin to become his wife.

By this time Alice's views of life had completely changed. She had not only forgotten that she had ever loved Paul—a comparatively trifling feat; she had not only fallen in love with some one else—an accomplishment likewise not difficult of feminine attainment; but she had succeeded in putting Edgar so completely in Paul's place that the change was retrospective, and Edgar was actually the richer for Alice's former devotion to Paul.

She had not blotted out the sum of her old love—she had merely transferred it from Paul's account to Edgar's; which was a decidedly wiser plan, as thus no good material was wasted. All the dreams of her springtime and the romance of her early summer, now went to the making of a rich harvest of affection for Edgar Ford to reap. Alice was one of the women who cannot live

without loving; the man that such a woman happens to love is a mere matter of detail.

To an artist his art is everything, and it is born in him; the masters, under whom he studies, can only teach him style and manner and the tricks of his craft. In after life the pupil may learn in other schools, but he will always be a better artist because of the education which he received from the teachers who first trained him. Thus it is with women of the type of Alice Martin. The power of loving is part of themselves, and nothing can crush that out of them. They may learn technique from the master under whom they first study; but if in later days they turn to other teachers, that particular instructor will be forgotten, though they will always be able to love better because of the education which they received from him.

It may be true that "over the past not heaven itself has power"; but in this respect, if it be so, certain women have the advantage of heaven—at least as far as their own feelings are concerned. They can recolour the past so as to make it a becoming background for the present, just as we can repaper our drawing-rooms when we buy new furniture; and they can change the cast of their little dramas, long after the play has been played and the lights turned out.

The conies are a feeble folk; but their strength lies in their power to make use of the rock so as to meet their own requirements.

It was a better thing for Alice to love Edgar than it had ever been to love Paul, because Edgar was suited to her and Paul was not. A woman can always adapt herself to the man she loves, and be—for as long as she chooses—the sort of woman that he approves; but, though it is not difficult for a woman to be somebody

else instead of herself for a time, it becomes fatiguing if kept up for too long. After a while it feels like walking in boots which are a shade too short, or biting crusts when one has the toothache.

It was a source of keen delight to Edgar that Alice shared his socialistic views with respect to the sanctity of the individual and the wrongfulness of riches; he did not know that she would have agreed with him just the same had he preached the subjugation of the masses and the divine right of kings.

"Alice, do you think you could ever love me?" Edgar asked suddenly one day, when they two were practising duets together.

"I think I have always loved you," she answered softly.

This was no untruth. Alice had always loved the hero of the piece; that Paul had been for a time Edgar's understudy in the part, had no practical bearing on the case.

"Then will you be my wife?"

"Yes."

Edgar wanted to kiss Alice, but he refrained for fear of frightening her. Alice wanted Edgar to kiss her, and could not imagine why he did not do so. It was in things like this that Edgar made mistakes. He had never learnt that nine times out of ten other people want the same things as we do; and if they don't, it doesn't so very much matter, as long as we get our own way.

"I do not wish to deceive you," he said, "or to win your love under false pretences, though that love is the desire of my heart. But my wife will have no luxury, though the world counts me a rich man."

"I don't want luxury," replied Alice; "I only want you."

"Do you mean to say you dare face a life of toil and poverty for my sake?"

"Of course I do. Don't you understand that I care for nothing but being with you, and feeling that you are pleased with me?"

Then Edgar took her in his arms and kissed her, and Alice's cup of bliss was full.

"You know my views about money," Edgar said, "and that I hold it a sin for any man to live a life of ease and pleasure while his fellow-men are starving. Well, I simply cannot go on any longer living my present life, when I know of the sea of sin and suffering and sorrow all around me. I feel I must go down into the midst of it, and do something for those weaker brethren for whom Christ died."

Alice's beautiful face was aglow with excitement: "I will come down with you, and stand by your side. I think it is splendid of you to give up everything for the sake of the poor; and I am proud to be the woman you have chosen to help you to bear this burden and to take up this cross!"

"My darling! do you think you can be quite happy without horses and carriages and all the external trappings of wealth?"

"I should rather think I could! I don't care a bit about things like that. Mamma thinks they are important, but they have always bothered me ever since I was a little girl and used to think it a treat to walk out to tea instead of having the carriage."

"But you will be a rich woman on your own account, Alice, and you must do what you will with your own."

"I shall give it all to you to do whatever you like with, and it will help us to help others all the more."

"Then will you come and live with me down at the

Stepney Settlement, in connection with Hampden House, and take your part in the work there?" asked Edgar. "It is a grand field for labour, and the labourers are as yet few."

"Of course I will. I will go anywhere with you and do anything for you as long as I live."

"My brave little girl!"

Alice slipped her hand into his. "And I will always act as you bid me and obey you in everything, if only you'll promise never, never to be cross with me. I think it would kill me if ever you were vexed with me; so you won't be, will you?"

"I?—vexed with you? My dearest, the thing is unthinkable."

"Then I don't care what happens," said Alice contentedly. "But you were once awfully cross with me, you know."

"My child, what on earth do you mean?"

"Oh! it was one time—ages and ages ago—when you never would speak to me if you could help it, and it used to make me so miserable. You really were cross then." And Alice's disengaged hand wandered idly over the keys.

"Not cross, dear; only very, very unhappy, because I loved you and I did not think you would ever love me."

Alice raised her pretty eyebrows. "Well, that was hardly the way to make me love you, was it? It wasn't likely that I should fall in love with a man in a temper—at least I mean to say with a man who looked as if he were in a temper."

"Do you think you would have loved me then, Alice, if you had known that all my outside sternness was merely the mask I put on to hide my love for you? Tell me, dear, I want to know."

Alice thought for a moment. "I expect I should, for I have always adored the shape of your nose."

Edgar laughed, and Alice went on: "I used to be afraid that I bored you because I wasn't clever; but now you don't mind my not being clever a bit, do you?"

"My darling, I hate clever women; a woman is meant to be beautiful and good, and cleverness simply spoils her."

"Then don't you admire Isabel Carnaby?"

(Alice was still a woman, though she was ready to go down and live in the Stepney Settlement.)

"I couldn't exactly say that I don't admire her; she is so modern and up-to-date, that I regard her as a sort of national institution that one ought to feel proud of—a specimen of what the nineteenth century can produce. But she never attracts me in the least; she is cold and brilliant and hard, like a diamond, and has nothing lovable about her, as far as I can see."

Alice drew a little contented sigh. "And she isn't really pretty, is she?"

"Not at all. I never can bear blue eyes; they are always cold and unsympathetic, I think."

"What coloured eyes do you like best?"

"Brown—like velvet; and hair to match and a complexion like a rose-leaf."

Alice laughed a low happy laugh. "I am so glad you don't mind my being stupid."

"You are not stupid, dear; you are full of tact—which is infinitely better than cleverness. See how well you can talk to the poor, and how you can make them love you. You have a happy knack of always saying the right thing."

"I am so glad. You don't know how hard I try to be the sort of woman that you approve of; I am always

thinking of you, and of what I can do or say to please you."

"Dear Alice!" said Edgar tenderly; "you overpower me with the feeling that I can never do enough to deserve all this love."

"No, Edgar; it is I who ought to be grateful, because whatever niceness there is in me is all your doing. It is you who have moulded my character and formed my opinions; so that whatever good I may do in this world must be put down to your credit and not mine."

Which was quite true; and Edgar had every reason to be proud of his handiwork.

There was joy at The Cedars because of Alice's engagement to Edgar Ford. Mrs. Martin fairly beamed. She felt that Providence had had a hand in the matter—which was perfectly true; nevertheless when Providence had seemed to be bringing about a union between her daughter and Paul Seaton, Mrs. Martin, like a troublesome politician, was not willing to "serve under" the Leader in power. In this respect she was by no means singular; we are all naturally more submissive to the decrees of heaven when those decrees are in accordance with our own desires.

"My dear," she said to her daughter, "I am sure you will be very happy, because a woman naturally requires one stronger than herself to lean upon; and, besides, Edgar is an only son, so that whatever his parents have to leave will come to him."

"I could never have been happy as an old maid, mamma; the feeling that nobody needed me or cared for me would have killed me."

Mrs. Martin stitched at her bazaar-work with a complacent smile: "I know it would, love; you have such a very affectionate nature. And it is difficult for a single

woman to take any social position, unless she is a lady of title."

Alice listened dutifully, and her mother rambled on: "It will be so nice for you, dear, when Edgar goes into Parliament; for I hear that members of Parliament and their wives are received in the highest circles. It is a pity dear Edgar isn't a Conservative—there is always such refinement about Conservatives—but that cannot be helped, I suppose."

"Oh! mamma, Edgar would never become a Conservative."

"I am not suggesting that he should, my love; but perhaps in time you might persuade him to become an old-fashioned Whig; and that, I believe, is almost as aristocratic. Still I cannot help wishing that he had been a Conservative in the first instance; you see, a Radical may be a gentleman, but a Conservative must be one."

"I don't see that."

"Don't you, love? Well, I can hardly explain it to you, but I have a feeling that it is more correct to be a Conservative."

"But I could not try to make Edgar go against his own convictions, mamma."

Mrs. Martin paused for a moment while she selected a fresh thread of silk; then she said: "Ah! my love, if you want to get on in society, you must think more about conventions than convictions. And since Edgar persists in remaining a Radical, I would ignore it if I were you."

"But there is nothing to be ashamed of in one's politics," persisted Alice; "men have a right to think what they like."

"Still, my dear, if one espoused the cause of the

people, it might lead to the impression that one had risen from the people ; and that would be extremely painful to any one, especially to a person with my sensitive feelings."

Alice however was obstinate ; it was her one fault and she freely indulged in it. "We are risen from the people," she said ; "that is merely the truth."

Her mother sighed, as she threaded her needle. "When you have lived as long as I have, my dear, you will find that the truth is generally vulgar and invariably inexpedient."

"Edgar and I don't mean to behave like rich people, or to go in for society, but to live among the poor and try to help them."

Mrs. Martin smiled indulgently. "Young men often get strange, socialistic notions like that into their heads, but a few drops of nitre on a lump of sugar soon put them all right again."

"But I don't want to put Edgar all right as you call it, mamma ; the reason why I love him so dearly is that he is so good and unworldly and has such high ideals."

"My dear child, he will be all right when he is married. My experience is that there is nothing like getting married for curing young men of ideals and nonsense of that kind. Your dear papa never bothered his head about ideals after he had married me."

"Edgar says the truth is stronger than everything, and that the height of good breeding is never to be ashamed of anything," persisted Alice, whose "strength was as the strength of ten" when she had "Edgar says" to back up her opinions.

"My dear child, I am double Edgar's age, and I have learnt that bare facts, like everything else, require clothing ; and that the more becoming the clothing, the more effective the facts."

Mrs. Martin had learnt a great deal during the last ten years. She had got on in the world, and the world had taught her much and found her an apt pupil. It is the world's business to cover its vessels with the very best electro-plate; this is all that it undertakes to do, and it never pretends to be a depôt for hall-marked articles. If we give ourselves up to the world's hardening process, and duly worship rank and wealth and success and all other licensed gods, it will hide our weaknesses under its elegant electro covering, and we shall shine for a while like burnished silver. But the real metal is found elsewhere.

In the spring of the year the long-expected Dissolution was announced. Excitement ran high all through the country as the general election approached; and Michael Ford was full of delight to think that at last he should see his life's ambition realized, and his son a member of Parliament.

But when he mentioned the subject to that son, Edgar—for the first time in his life—was not amenable to his father's wishes.

"I am more sorry than I can ever say to disappoint you, but I cannot stand at this election," he said.

Mr. Ford was dumfounded. "My dear boy, what on earth do you mean? You have plenty of money, and no business cares to occupy your time and attention; and at Chayford the thing will be simply a walk-over."

"It isn't that I am afraid of not getting in—it is something quite different from that. If I thought it right to stand, no amount of opposition would deter me."

"Then what is it? If you think that your views are too advanced to please me, you need have no further hesitation on that score. I have long ago learnt that the ways of old folks are too slow for the younger generation,

and that we must be content to let the stream flow on as quickly as it will, and not attempt to let or hinder it."

Edgar longed to spare his father the pain which he felt bound to inflict; but this was impossible. He had dallied long enough, and now the time had come to speak out.

"I have made up my mind, and nothing now can alter me," he began, and his face was very white; "for a long time my duty to you has been in conflict with the duty which I owe to a higher Power; but now a crisis has come, and I feel I must hesitate no longer."

Mr. Ford did not speak, so Edgar went on: "I do not feel it right for me to be living in luxury while so many of my fellow-men are perishing with hunger; I do not feel it right for me to be living in idleness while so many of my brethren cry out for help. The call has come for me to go out into the highways and hedges and compel all that are bidden to come in to the feast; and it is a call which may not be disobeyed."

"But, my dear Edgar, did it never occur to you that you might serve God and your generation more effectually as an influential statesman than as an hysterical socialist?"

Mr. Ford's voice was hard and dry, but Edgar's face was alight with an enthusiasm which no worldly wisdom could quench.

"My dear father, you know as well as I do that it is not in me to become a statesman, or even an ordinary politician. I could never merge myself in my party, or content myself with compromises; I should always be fighting little battles of my own, and tilting at windmills which nobody but myself could see. I do not belong to any party; I have too many fads and scruples to identify myself with any political school. Therefore I should not

be justified in asking any constituency to return me as its member. It would be unfair to my constituents and unfair to myself."

Mr. Ford played with a paper-knife, but he did not say anything. What was the use?

"I do not deny," Edgar continued, "that a politician is called to do a great and necessary work; I merely say that I am not called upon to be a politician. Oh! father, do not tempt me. I know all the arguments that you would use, and I have tried in vain to stifle my own conscience with them over and over again. I have lived an upright and honourable life—but that is not enough; I have kept my heart pure and my hands clean—but that is not enough; through it all I can hear one Voice speaking: 'Sell all thou hast and give to the poor'. And dare I turn away because I have great possessions?"

Michael Ford sighed heavily, but still he did not speak. His face looked ten years older than it had looked ten minutes ago.

"It cuts me to the heart to hurt you like this after all that you have done for me," continued Edgar, and his voice trembled; "but I see my way plain before my face, and I dare not turn aside; 'for he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me'."

"Then what do you intend to do?" asked Mr. Ford wearily, looking across his writing-table at the young man standing by the fireplace.

"I intend to join the Hampden House Settlement at Stepney, and to live with the poor and for the poor; and I hope to spend the rest of my life in trying to comfort broken hearts and to brighten darkened homes. I have closed my ears to the cry of suffering humanity long enough—too long, alas!—but at last they have been opened; and after *Ephphatha* has once been pronounced,

a man cannot but listen to the cries of his fellows and to the commands of his God."

"What does Alice say to all this?"

The mention of Alice's name gave her lover fresh courage.

"She agrees with me in all my decisions," he said, "and she is ready to share in all my efforts; in fact, it is her enthusiasm which has inspired and sustained me, and has renewed my strength when I felt ready to fall."

"Are you aware that both you and Alice will each have a very large fortune of your own some day?" Mr. Ford asked drily.

"Is any fortune too large to give to God?" was Edgar's response.

Michael Ford saw that the case was hopeless; therefore he wasted no more time in discussing it. He knew that it is possible, by means of argument, to convince a man's judgment and even to overcome his prejudices; but arguing against a man's conscience is sorry work—ninety-nine times out of a hundred it meets with no success; and the hundredth entails a responsibility which is harder to bear than failure.

When Edgar left him, Mr. Ford sat for a while buried in thought. "It is the way of the world," he said to himself; "one man is born to wealth and power and success, and he flings them all away; another man has everything against him, and he climbs to the top of the tree. The son of the rich man serves, while the son of the poor man sits down to meat; and one man labours, in order that another man's son may enter into his labours. Certainly Fate has a sense of humour."

Then he took up his pen and wrote to Paul Seaton.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Election.

They fought all day with might and main;
And when the sun was set
The victors longed to fight again—
The vanquished, to forget.

PAUL SEATON was one of the men who possess the useful knack of knowing when the tide of their affairs is at the flood; so when Mr. Ford asked him to come down and fight the Liberal battle at Chayford in Edgar's stead, Paul consented without an hour's delay.

At the beginning of the campaign Joanna came home, completely restored to health, bringing Isabel with her; and the inhabitants of the Cottage gave themselves up body and soul to the election, and talked and thought and dreamed of nothing else. Great was the excitement all over England, and Chayford was no exception to the rule. For three weeks Paul made several speeches per day, and was treated as if he were a combination of Juggernaut and a popular preacher, with a flavour of Royalty thrown in.

Everybody in the town, including even the babies and the cats, wore colours, if it were nothing better than a scrap of tea paper; and there was all that delicious love of fighting in the air which makes an election like a glorious war with no death or danger in it.

"Isn't it fun?" exclaimed Isabel one day. "I adore every minute of it. It makes you hate the other side with such an exquisite frenzy of hatred, which has neither malice nor uncharitableness in it and yet which is so charmingly violent while it lasts."

"I know," agreed Joanna; "it is that nice sort of hatred which would never let you really injure people, but which makes you want their chimneys to smoke and their hats to blow off."

Isabel laughed. "And your love for your own side is equally enjoyable. I assure you I feel the most fervent glow of affection for all the Liberals in Chayford—just as if they were relations and it was Christmas Day."

"Yet all the time you know that these feelings will completely die out within a week of the declaration of the poll!" added Joanna.

"Of course you do; that is why they are so delightful. Feelings that last, take a good deal out of you I have discovered; the really delicious sort are those that you think will last for ever and that you know won't," said Isabel.

"I am afraid, my dear girl, that you are becoming an epicure in emotions," remarked Paul, who had just come in.

"I know I am; an election, supervening on a love-affair, is enough to intoxicate any woman, especially when the beloved object and the candidate are one. You can't think what glorious thrills I have all down my back when the crowds applaud you. Liberalism and love combined so overwhelm my soul that I feel you are the only man in the whole world, and the English nation rolled into one; and I am as tearful as if people were singing 'God Save the Queen' and 'Auld Robin Gray' at the same

time. Oh! it is a delicious feeling, and I am eternally grateful to you for giving it to me."

Paul beamed with delight, but, being a man, did not say pretty things before a third person; Isabel, being a woman, did.

"I adore elections," she continued, waltzing round the room; "they are simply heavenly!"

"A general election and my idea of heaven are by no means synonymous," replied her lover quietly.

"My idea of heaven is pretty much the same as Beatrice's," Isabel said; "I shall go 'where the bachelors sit, and there live as merry as the day is long'. I shall say, 'Please reserve the place next to Mr Paul Seaton for me'; and if I find it already occupied, there will be unpleasantness, and I shall contest the seat."

"You are very brilliant to-day." And Paul looked at her proudly. She was worth looking at just then, as she had dressed herself entirely in blue, the Liberal colour in Chayford; and a woman always looks her best when her gown is of the same shade as her eyes.

"It is this lovely election! It has got into my head."

"Well, don't let it tire you; I would rather lose the seat than that you should knock yourself up in helping me to win it."

"I am glad you have warned her," said Joanna; "I am sure she works too hard, but she won't listen to me. She has too much spirit for her strength."

An anxious expression came over Paul's face. "You do look a bit tired, Isabel," he said.

"Rubbish!" she replied; then she looked at herself in the glass. "Should you call me a brilliant woman or a sweet woman?" she asked thoughtfully.

"Brilliant," replied Joanna.

"Both," replied Paul.

"That is absurd! I can't be both; nobody could."

"But you are."

Isabel carefully arranged her fringe: "That is just like your interesting but incomprehensible sex, my good sir. If you happen to care for a woman, you at once endow her with every possible virtue, totally irrespective of the fact that some of the virtues won't go together."

"Oh! that's what we do, is it?"

"Now we women behave differently. If we love a man, we don't plaster him over with all the good qualities; but we merely say that the virtues he doesn't possess are not virtues at all, and that no decent man would be seen with such things. But though the *modus operandi* in each case is different, the result is the same; that is to say, the beloved object in both instances has the monopoly of human excellencies."

"Well, I must be off," said Joanna rising; "I have some work to do."

After his sister had left the room, Paul made up his deficiency in the saying of pretty things.

"Where is Isabel?" asked Mrs. Seaton of her daughter, as the latter was going out.

"With Paul in the drawing-room."

Mrs. Seaton drew a sigh of perfect contentment.

"That is all right."

"What they have to say to each other that they are always wanting to be alone together, I cannot imagine," continued Joanna. "I never said anything in my life to anybody that a third person was not welcome to hear."

Her mother smiled. "You have not said all that there is to be said yet, then."

"Evidently not. There are still some things in heaven and earth undreamed of in my philosophy, and what those two good people talk to each other about is one of

them. If I were Isabel I could say all I wanted to say before us all, I am certain."

"But you couldn't if you were Paul, my dear."

Joanna rolled up her umbrella. "Well, mother, I don't pretend to understand it; I could never exchange confidences with anybody for all those hours on end, least of all with a man. I should be 'gravelled for lack of matter' in no time; but those dear, silly people go on for sixty minutes at a stretch, and then, if I happen to disturb them, look at me as reproachfully as if they had only had five seconds together, instead of 'a long hour by Shrewsbury clock'."

Among the most enthusiastic of Paul's political supporters was the faithful Martha. Whenever she was able, she attended his meetings, and regarded them almost as means of grace.

"I don't believe that the Pope of Rome or the President of the Conference could make finer speeches than Master Paul does," she said one day, as she was dusting the drawing-room, and Joanna was arranging the flowers.

Joanna laughed. "He is certainly a born orator, Martha; he plays upon his audience as if he were playing upon an organ."

"He does indeed, miss; and never seems at a loss for a word. I'm bound to say I didn't think Master Paul had it in him to speak like that. When you listen to him, you wonder how the folks that think differently have managed to keep themselves out of the lunatic asylums; and that is the sort of speaking, and the sort of preaching, that does real good, to my thinking."

"Still, I suppose, one ought to hear both sides of a question," argued the wise Joanna.

"Certainly not, miss; there is nothing so unsettling. Besides, where's the good? Only one side can be right,

that is plain ; and what is the use of wasting the time in listening to the side that is wrong ? ”

“ But, Martha, how can you tell which side is right without hearing both ? ”

Martha dusted so fiercely that the ornaments fairly danced. “ Bless your dear heart, if you are a woman, you know who is right and who is wrong before you’ve heard a single word ; and if you are a man, you don’t know who is right and who is wrong after you’ve heard all there is to be said. But Mr. Paul’s speeches are very convincing, all the same ; especially to folks as think the same as he does to begin with.”

“ Oratory is a great power,” remarked Joanna, half to herself ; “ it must be lovely to see hundreds of people hanging upon every word you utter, and to know that you can sway them for the time being as it pleases you ! ”

“ It must indeed, my dear—in fact, it seems almost too great a power to be put into the hands of a man, even though the man be dear Master Paul himself. But it is a wonder to me that men get on in the world as well as they do, considering that they know nothing and can’t bear to be taught. They say Providence takes special care of children and naturals, so I suppose Providence looks after men in the same sort of way. If it wasn’t so, goodness knows what would become of them—the unmarried ones in particular ! ”

“ You used to be such a strong Conservative,” Joanna suggested, as she filled a vase with daffodils.

“ So I was, miss ; at one time the Conservatives seemed to me to do the least mischief of the two parties, because they were better able to mind their own business and leave the country to look after itself. As I have often passed the remark, interference is the one thing that I can’t stand. I have no objection to speaking a

word in season or out of season, whenever I think it is needed ; but I know my own business, and I won't stand being taught it by anybody. And, I take it, the country is the same as me, miss ; and doesn't want Governments to come poking their noses into things that don't concern them."

"So now I suppose you are a Liberal, Martha?"

"Well, I don't know that I'd go as far as that," replied Martha cautiously ; "my father was a Liberal, and the love of reform got into his blood till he couldn't eat a bit of bacon without telling us how much better it might have been cooked if he'd had the doing of it himself. I've noticed, miss, that when the master of a house is a reformer, there's often trouble in the kitchen ; so I set my face against reforms of any kind, as it were." And the good woman shook her duster to and fro, as if the whole Liberal party were wrapped up in it.

"Still some changes are improvements," persisted Joanna.

"I never came across them, miss ; it seems to me that a new way of governing the country is like a new way of frying potatoes—the potatoes are no better than they were before, and the grease always smells. Still, my dear, I am no longer a Conservative. Take my word for that."

"What made you change your politics?" Joanna asked.

"Why, the way the Conservatives have turned against our Paul. As long as they kept themselves to themselves, and acted according to their lights, I had no objections to them ; though I confess they sometimes made mistakes, like their betters. But when they turned against Master Paul, it was a different thing, and then I washed my hands once for all of the whole boiling of them."

Joanna smiled, as she disposed of her last daffodil. Martha's politics were so essentially feminine. As long as a political party contents itself with revolutionizing States and annexing continents and disestablishing Churches, and other trifling pastimes such as these, no right-minded woman troubles her head about it; these things amuse it and do not hurt her. But when the political party takes advantage of this patience and forbearance on her part, and goes to the length of actually contesting the seat in Parliament of some particular man, the sleeping tigress wakes up and shows all the claws wherewith provident Nature has endowed her. Which conduct is, after all, only natural; and the offending faction has no one but itself to blame.

But it is the same with parties as with individuals; if one gives them an inch they take an ell.

At last the day of the Chayford election dawned; and—as is the way of election days—it was so long, that it seemed as if the sun had stood still to watch the battle, as it did in the time of Joshua. But it came to an end at last; and the little party at the Cottage sat up till midnight awaiting Paul and the result. At first everybody said it would be a walk-over; but anybody who knows anything about electioneering will be aware that, however certain a seat may be, and however enormous the majority last time, fears come with fighting, whilst agonizing doubts foreshadow the declaration of the poll.

Paul's little home-circle felt very anxious; and the more they doubted the result, the more they kept repeating that there was no room for doubt at all. The Liberal majority at Chayford at the last election had been nine hundred; and they continually assured each other (and themselves) that a majority of that size could no more melt away than an Alp could.

"You see," said Mr. Seaton, "though of course it might have diminished, a majority of that size could not possibly have transformed itself into a minority in three years." He was thinking to himself that if only four hundred and fifty voters had gone over to the other side, Paul would be beaten.

"Of course not," replied Joanna; "the result really is a foregone conclusion; it is only a question as to the size of the majority. She felt sure that the Conservative papers could not write as they did, if they had not grounds for their hope of which she knew nothing.

"It is really absurd to think that a mere boy like Lord Gailey should beat a brilliant politician like Paul; the idea is simply ludicrous!" exclaimed Isabel; but she wished to goodness that Paul had not had an aristocrat for his opponent, as there is an underlying respect for titles at the bottom of every British heart.

"It is no use our expecting Paul for a couple of hours yet," remarked Paul's mother; "it would be impossible for him to be here before then." She was feeling that something dreadful must have happened—either that the mob had killed Paul or else had not elected him—otherwise he would have been at home an hour ago.

And so they went on telling little comforting fibs to each other, and inwardly wondering how much longer this suspense could be endured.

Suddenly they heard the sound of wheels, and the stamping and shouting of a multitude.

"Here he is," said Mr. Seaton gently; and he went very white and took his wife's hand.

Joanna and Isabel were past speaking; so they tried to laugh—and failed.

The noise grew louder. The crowd had taken the horses out of Paul's carriage, and were drawing it along

with deafening cheers. At last they pulled up at the Cottage gate, and Paul sprang out and thanked them, and rushed inside.

"It is all right!" he cried; "I am in with a majority of twelve hundred."

Then he went straight up to Isabel and kissed her before them all.

"I am very glad I have won," he said simply; "because it gives me something to give to you, who have given me so much."

So it came to pass that the old wastes and the former desolations were built up and repaired in the life of Paul Seaton: and the name of the builder and repairer was Love.

A few days after the election—while Paul was helping a brother candidate and Joanna was working in her district—Isabel made her confession to Paul's father and mother. She told them the whole story: how she had written *Shams and Shadows* in a fit of temper—how Paul had saved her from the consequences of her mad act—how she had selfishly let him bear the blame—how his love for her had at last conquered the weakness and worldliness of her nature, and taught her that it is not in the power of outside things to make a woman happy—and how she had promised to keep the secret all her life, after she had once told the truth to his own people.

"I could not rest till I had your forgiveness," she said in conclusion; "but if you will only say you forgive me, I have promised I will never mention the subject again."

"I forgive you utterly, my child," replied the minister; "the deed shall be blotted out as though it had never been; and I thank my son for having taught me how divine a thing sometimes is human love."

"And you?" whispered Isabel to Mrs. Seaton.

Paul's mother took Isabel in her arms. "Of course I forgive you, my dear one, because Paul has forgiven you, and because you have loved much; and I thank you for having given my son back to me again"

"I understand," said Isabel softly; "the Paul that you know, never could have written that horrid book, so you felt that there were two Pauls."

"That was just it," Mrs. Seaton replied; "and I could not make the two Pauls agree with one another in my mind. But now you have not only given the old Paul back to me; you have shown me that he is not merely as good as I believed he was, but infinitely nobler and better than I had dreamed. I did not think that my son could ever have written *Shams and Shadows*; but, on the other hand, I did not think that he could ever have performed so noble an act of self-sacrifice as this. So you have restored him to me fourfold."

"I can never forgive myself," sobbed Isabel.

Mrs. Seaton drew the weeping girl close to her. "My dear, you must, for Paul's sake. Remember he loves you so much, that he could not forgive anybody for not forgiving you."

"And we must not forget," added the minister, "that it is love for you which has made Paul into the man he is; so you have had much to do with the making of Paul, and therefore his mother and I love you for it."

"I did not do it. It was God who made Paul what he is, and I was just the instrument."

Mr Seaton smiled. "Exactly, my dear; but there is nothing remarkable in that. The man who does the most, is nothing more than God's instrument for fulfilling His purposes; and the man who does the least, is no less than that. But we love best the instruments whereby

the most good is wrought; and so also, I think, does God."

Paul and his mother were left together for a few minutes that evening.

"My dear," she said, "Isabel has told me everything."

Paul's face fell. "I am sorry she told you, mother; but she would do it."

"Don't be sorry, Paul; it is the greatest joy to me to find that I have nothing for which to blame my dear son; but that he has been all that I believed and hoped, and far more."

"Still, I had rather that you blamed me than that you blamed her; that is the one thing that I could not bear even from you, mother."

"I do not blame her as I blamed you; the two cases are so different. Don't you know that when a woman is angry she says far more than she means, but that a man—however angry—never says as much? So one can hardly pass the same judgment on the utterances of both."

Paul looked relieved. "You think then that she was—but no; I may find fault with what she writes, but never with what she is; and no one else shall find fault with her at all. You will remember that this confidence is sacred, mother; and that no one but my father and Joanna must ever share it with you."

"Certainly; you may trust us, Paul."

"And you will love Isabel always?"

"Always, dear; both for your sake and her own."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Life in London.

*If you will only give me time,
And likewise opportunity,
To earth's high places I will climb
And govern the community.*

ONE summer's day it happened that Mr. Kesterton gave a tea-party on the terrace of the House of Commons in honour of the Robert Thistle towns, the Paul Seatons and Lady Farley. It was one of those broiling afternoons, when all the world longs for shade and a breeze; and these two luxuries are almost always to be found on the terrace at Westminster. The latter is sometimes found inside the walls as well; but this "indoor relief" cannot be depended upon. Everybody knows that when the two Houses of Parliament agree, there are few things that they cannot compass; so when they combine to cast a pleasant shade—and get the river Thames to help them with a cool breeze or two—they naturally succeed in producing the most refreshing atmosphere that is to be found in London in July.

Isabel loved going to the House now; for to her "inward eye" St. Stephen's had suddenly developed—from being a mere uninteresting historical antiquity and dry political fact—into an effective and suitable background

for the figure of her husband. Therefore the place was worth seeing as often as she had time to see it; and she was absorbingly interested in everything that she saw. But to her this afternoon was a special occasion; for Paul had made his first great speech in a full-dress debate (and his reputation at the same time), and was receiving congratulations on all sides. Isabel and her aunt had heard the speech from behind the gilt lattice of the ladies' gallery; while it was being delivered, the former felt that here at last was the ideal statesman for whom England had waited through the ages; while the latter decided that Paul spoke like a man and looked like a gentleman, and that Isabel might have done worse.

When it was tea-time Mr. Kesterton came to fetch them down to the terrace; and their progress was punctuated by compliments on Paul's success from all the members that they met

Isabel knew what admiration of herself was like; she had lived on it all her life, and had thought that there was nothing better. Now she found that there was.

"How many members are killed every year from tumbling down this pitch-dark staircase?" she inquired of her host as they proceeded to the terrace.

"That, my dear lady, is a State secret which I am not at liberty to divulge. We never talk about it. We just hide them under the stairs, like the princes in the Tower, and no one asks any questions."

"I suppose it would be unconstitutional for public men to see which way they were going?" suggested Isabel.

"Most unconstitutional," answered the Cabinet Minister; "and most detrimental to anything in the shape of a forward policy. Besides, if it were not for that dark staircase, what should we leaders do with the

private members who have private opinions? We should have to dissemble our love so far as to kick them downstairs; and that also would be unconstitutional."

Isabel nodded. "I see; you recommend the Amy Robsart cure."

"*Laisser faire* is a most successful course of treatment," added Lady Farley; "I have spent my life in allowing people sufficient rope, and the victims of my indulgence hang in rows, like the tails of Little Bo-peep's flock."

Then Paul met them, and was patted on the back by Mr. Kesterton and praised by Lady Farley. Isabel felt she could not speak to him about his speech before all these people—it would be like saying one's prayers at a ball; so she just looked into his eyes and smiled; and Paul understood.

"Here are the Thistle towns," said Mr. Kesterton, going forward to receive his guests.

Lord Bobby still limped, though he was limping along the road to complete recovery; and as he had won his V.C.—and Violet—his cup of happiness was full. As for his wife, she was lovelier than ever; she had got what she wanted, and there is nothing so becoming to a woman as that.

"Very glad to see you, Lady Robert," exclaimed her host; "I hope your husband is getting all right again, though with such a nurse as he now has I cannot blame him if he lengthens out the long-drawn sweetness of his convalescence to its fullest extent."

Violet held out a daintily gloved hand. "Oh! he is much better, thank you: aren't you, Bobby?"

"Indeed I am," agreed the invalid; "I'm nearly fit again now, but I've had a narrow shave of it with that silly old leg of mine. Those Johnnies of doctors wanted

to chop it off at one time, and then my wife and I would only have had three legs between us, like the Isle of Man. Shouldn't we, Vi?"

"Oh! don't dear," pleaded Violet, with a pretty little shudder. "I cannot bear to hear you talk like that."

It was a very merry tea-party; they all liked each other, and the weather was fine—two most important ingredients in a social success. Isabel especially was delightfully happy and important; she felt that Paul was standing on his own ground at last, and that it was very creditable ground to be standing upon; and she took therefore a proprietary interest in the House of Commons, and all that appertained to it.

"What would happen if I were to walk on the part of the terrace reserved for members?" she asked.

"The shade of Cromwell would exclaim, 'Remove that bauble!' and then you would be removed by the officials of the House, and burnt in effigy every 5th of November," Lord Robert hastened to assure her.

"Should I, Mr. Kesterton?"

"That is the usual punishment for such an offence."

"But I am an M.P.-ress myself, you see."

"Then in that case you might only be named by the Speaker," replied Mr. Kesterton; "that is the next worst thing."

"I hope that my husband shows no signs of becoming an independent member," said Isabel; "because I don't approve of independent members."

"Not at all," answered her host; "he is a credit alike to the woman who trained him and the party that owns him."

"I am thankful for that; I think that people who make their own opinions are almost as bad as people who make their own clothes."

The front-bench man nodded his approval of this sentiment, as he dispensed the strawberries and cream.

"What is done to members who have opinions of their own and are troublesome to their leaders?" Mrs. Paul Seaton further inquired.

Mr. Kesterton's eyes twinkled. "The correct thing is for them to be hanged, drawn and quartered; but, if they happen to have charming wives, the sentence is generally commuted to transportation for life to the House of Lords."

"I see. Well, I am glad to hear that my husband behaves himself prettily, and that you approve of him."

"He certainly behaves himself prettily, my dear lady; and I always approve of and nearly always agree with him. The only difference between us is that he is still young enough to aim at perfection, whilst I have learnt to be satisfied with success."

"You see, my wife is anxious to learn the customs of the House," said Paul.

"Then, my dear Isabel, let me give you one piece of valuable information," chimed in Lord Bobby; "do not for a moment imagine that because our old friend Guy Fawkes was reprimanded for trying to blow up the Houses of Parliament, there is anything to prevent you from blowing up the members separately. This custom is not only lawful, but frequently expedient; and in certain cases—such as your own for instance—not only expedient, but absolutely necessary."

"You know nothing at all about it," replied Isabel with dignity.

"Pardon me; my father is a member of the Upper House, and—until my marriage—I resided principally at home."

Every one laughed, and Paul said: "You must not go about telling the secrets of the Upper House in that way, Thistle-town".

Bobby shook his head reprovingly. "Don't crush all the spirit out of that poor little thing. She has a right to know that she may bully you if she wants to do so, and that nobody can stop her. You shouldn't take advantage of your dear wife's well-known meekness and submission, Seaton; you really shouldn't. If you had married a woman who could speak up for herself, it would have been different. But I cannot bear to see cruelty to dumb animals."

"I wonder if a meek wife would have suited Paul," remarked Lady Farley, leisurely sipping her tea.

"I expect so," Bobby answered, "because he has chosen the other sort; just like gouty men always drink champagne and port (when their wives aren't looking)."

"I have often noticed," said Mr. Kesterton, "that men, as a rule, fall in love with the exact opposite of the type that they theoretically approve of."

"I have noticed more than that," added Lady Farley; "having selected, as you say, the exact opposite, they set about transforming the object selected into their ideal type. This seems to my ignorant mind a waste of time and trouble, when the market is overstocked with their ideal types already."

"I know what you mean," agreed Isabel; "the man who admires silent women, loses his heart to a chatter-box, and spends the rest of his mortal life in teaching her to hold her tongue."

Lady Farley nodded. "In the same way, a man who applauds female brains, is carried off his feet by a pretty fool, and then wears her and himself out by trying to educate her."

"It is stupid of men to behave like that," said Violet Thistle-town.

"Not at all," argued her aunt; "it is stupid of the women not to adapt themselves."

"I don't know about that. How should you like to have to pretend to a man that you were not clever, Aunt Caroline?" inquired Isabel, who, having been married for only a few months, naturally imagined that she knew all there was to be known concerning the management of Man.

"I have already done so, my dear, for thirty years, with the utmost success. To this day my husband always insists upon fighting my battles for me."

"With what results?" asked Mr. Kesterton.

"The battles, of course, are lost; but what does that matter? The process stimulates his chivalrous instincts, and so increases his attachment to me. It is far more important that a woman's husband should think that he knows better than she does, than that the world should see that he doesn't."

The three men fully agreed with Lady Farley.

"The sole duty of woman is to be charming," she continued in her pretty drawl; "and if only the women of to-day would do their hair properly instead of letting their heads run upon their wrongs, and would study how to amuse men instead of how to solve life-problems, there would soon be no wrongs and no life-problems left."

"Also women would not talk about Art with a capital A," agreed Paul; "Art with a capital A always bores me."

"My experience is that a woman's heart has no *lie* in it when she spells it with a capital A," said Isabel wisely.

"I don't know how it is," mused Lady Farley, putting down her tea-cup; "but women, who spell abstract

nouns with capital letters, generally seem independent of such artificial aids to beauty as soap and water and hair brushes."

Mr Kesterton smiled; Lady Farley amused him extremely. "Then doesn't Milady claim equal rights with men?" he asked.

Milady raised her delicate eyebrows in well-bred surprise. "Of course not; why should I? The cleverest woman should be ready to knock under to the stupidest man if necessary—or at any rate to make him think that she does."

"I am shocked, Lady Farley, to hear you inculcating deceitfulness."

"I am not inculcating deceitfulness—I am preaching wisdom. When I was young I used to treat men as I treated women, and tell them the whole truth about everything. But it didn't answer; they couldn't stand it."

"So now you tell them stories, I presume?"

"No; I still give them the truth, but I offer it to them in a peptonized form, so that they can digest it without discomfort."

"But what are the pretty, stupid women to do when the men try to educate them?" asked Violet, who was generally conversationally left a long way behind the rest of the field.

Her aunt gently instructed her. "Their course is even simpler than that of the clever ones. They have merely to listen to their husband's opinions, and repeat them verbatim as their own. A man always thinks a woman clever whose thoughts are identical with his—but when her expression of them is also identical, he considers her absolutely brilliant."

Mr. Kesterton laughed heartily. "You have learnt a great many things, my dear lady."

"I have lived a long time and I have kept my eyes open. Nevertheless there are two things which I have never been able to find out; namely, why people fall in love, and why *Punch* is published on a Wednesday."

"Then Paul is even cleverer than you are, Aunt Caro'line," interpolated Paul's admiring wife; "because there is nothing that he doesn't know."

"Oh! yes there is," said Paul modestly; "I never know what to talk to young girls about, or what seven times eight are."

"I am with you there, Seaton," remarked the host; "the only things in which I take no interest are young girls and bimetallism."

"What is bimetallism?" asked Lady Robert.

Her husband looked appealingly round the table. "Think what my married life will be if she begins asking questions like that already!" Then he turned to his wife. "Bimetallism, my dear Violet, is the opposite of monometallism; let that suffice you."

"But what is monometallism?" persisted Violet.

"Monometallism is the opposite of monomania," replied Isabel; but Paul endeavoured—though of course vainly—to explain the terms to his wife's pretty cousin.

"I cannot stand young girls myself," agreed Lady Farley; "they are afraid of me, and I have no mercy on them."

"Then you ought to have," said Lord Bobby.

"I do not see the compulsion."

"Ah! Lady Farley," he continued, "you must remember that the quality of mercy should not be measured out by teaspoonfuls in a medicine-glass, but should be sent round in a watering-cart by the County Council."

"I know that," replied Lady Farley laughing; "never-

theless young girls are simple, and I never can stand simplicity."

"Neither can I," agreed Mr. Kesterton; "simple dinners and simple women are alike abhorrent to me, because they both always agree with me and that is so tiresome."

"By the way, it will be interesting when Seaton begins to teach you to hold your tongue," remarked Bobby to Isabel; "if he can accomplish that, he will be able to unite the offices of Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief and Archbishop of Canterbury in his own person, as he will have proved that the impossible is mere play to him."

"He will never try to teach me, you see, because he enjoys my conversation more than anything."

"Does he?" said Bobby softly. "Do you know I once went on a switchback railway with a man who said he enjoyed the motion more than anything? the next thing he said was that he wished he was dead."

The talk rippled on till tea was over, and then they all got up and walked about. As Paul and Isabel were leaning over the parapet and looking down into the water, Mr. Kesterton and Lady Farley passed within earshot, and the Cabinet Minister was saying: "I feel certain that he will be in the Government before long; there is no doubt he has a great future before him. It is a pity that he ever wrote that silly book, *Shams and Shadows*; but this clever niece of yours will keep him straight now. The men with clever wives are not the men who make mistakes, Lady Farley."

Paul looked down upon his wife and smiled; but the eyes that Isabel raised to his were full of tears.

Not long after the tea-party on the terrace, Edgar Ford dined at the Paul Seaton's pretty little house in

Kensington. Mr. Madderley was there ; also Mr. Seaton, who was spending a few days with his son, and was very much enjoying a sight of London under Isabel's auspices.

Edgar and Alice were to be married in the autumn ; and the former had already taken a house close to the Stepney Settlement, and was making ready for his bride.

The conversation at dinner ran upon Edgar's work among the poor ; and he made the others both laugh and cry at the mingled humour and pathos of his stories. Mr. Seaton especially was interested in the doings of the Settlement, and gave Edgar some valuable hints from out of the stores of his own wisdom and experience.

"The thing that strikes me most forcibly," said Edgar, when the servants had left the room, "is the kindness of the poor to one another. Underneath all the squalor and sordidness of poverty, there is something beautiful after all."

"You are right there," agreed Mr. Seaton. "I have, of course, worked much among the poor in my time, and this phase of their character has never failed to impress me."

"It is what I have always told you," cried Paul ; "human nature is a grand thing spoiled, but it is a grand thing still."

"But human nature must not be taken in the aggregate," said Edgar, playing with his empty wine-glass ; "masses always represent their lowest component parts. It is only when you deal with men and women individually, that you discover the underlying beauty of their characters. I hate to hear classes condemned wholesale, whether it be the frivolity of the rich or the brutality of the poor that is held up to scorn."

"So do I," added Mr. Seaton ; "there are frivolous poor and brutal rich ; and likewise there are saints to be

found equally in both classes, and more of them than we any of us dream."

"It seems to me," remarked Isabel, "that love is the leaven that leavens the whole lump. It is only when people begin to care for each other that the fineness of human nature is seen. I was horribly selfish myself till I really cared for somebody, and then I gradually became quite nice."

Mr. Madderley smiled, as he peeled a peach for his hostess ; he had watched Isabel's development with much interest, and he perceived that she displayed wonderful accuracy in diagnosing her own case.

"As long as you don't love anybody much, your character is like a garden in winter," she continued ; "one virtue is under a glass shade, and another is covered over with straw, and all of them are dreadfully pinched and sickly. Then love comes by, and it is summer ; and your garden rejoices and blossoms like the rose, without your bothering about it at all."

"Nevertheless," said Madderley, "I think that love, though admirable as a pastime, is a little too flimsy to be designated an underlying principle."

Isabel tossed her head. Madderley's cynicism always irritated her.

"I suppose you would say," she replied, "that there is no more ennobling influence than beauty."

"Exactly," rejoined the artist, serious for once in his life ; "what you call art, is the worship of beauty by the human mind ; what you call love, is the worship of beauty by the human heart ; and what you call religion, is the worship of beauty by the human soul."

Isabel was silent.

"You are right in thinking that love for the beautiful is to be found in strange places," said Edgar ; "last

month a lot of children were sent down from Hampden House into the country for a week; and one of the poorest and most ragged of them said afterwards to one of our Sisters: 'Oh! Sister, it was all so beautiful that it made me cry for you'. That simply meant, as you say, that the sight of natural beauty stimulated that child's highest feelings, and made her long for the person for whom she cared the most."

Isabel fully entered into the feelings of the little ragged girl; she had felt exactly the same herself at the State Concert.

"If the child hadn't loved the Sister first, the beauty of the country would not have had power to touch her," she said; "love is the *Open Sesame* that lets in beauty, and gives us eyes to see."

"I should put it just the other way," said Madderley; "and say that beauty is the cause of love."

"It seems to me that there is something deeper even than that," argued Paul; "some innate fineness, proper to human nature itself, which makes all these things possible to it."

"It is often surprising," remarked his wife, "how people are nearly always nice when one gets to know them, and pierces through the outer husk of artificiality which they wear before the world. I detest heaps of people that I have only met at dinner; but I think I like everybody that I have ever had breakfast with."

The others laughed.

"Which simply means that the better one knows one's fellow-creatures the better one thinks of them," added Paul.

"I cannot offer an opinion," said Madderley; "I have never been down to breakfast."

Paul turned to his father. "You have not given us

your idea yet as to what is really the name of the underlying power which leavens the whole lump of humanity, and which Isabel calls love, and Madderley calls beauty, and Edgar calls individualism, and I call human nature."

"I should call it by none of these names," replied Mr. Seaton; "these are but the branches of a root which goes deeper and is stronger than any of them, or than all of them put together."

"Then what should you say is the name of this underlying and yet exalting power?" asked Edgar.

The minister smiled. "I am an old-fashioned man and I use old-fashioned phrases," he said; "I should call it the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE END.

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